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SPECIMENS

OF

Early English Metrical Romances,

CHIEFLY WRITTEN

DURING THE EARLY PART

OF

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY;

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE

RISE AND PROGRESS OF ROMANTIC COMPOSITION

IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

BY GEORGE ELLIS, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following volumes are intended to supply a chasm in the "*Specimens of Early English Poets*," by explaining more fully the progress of our poetry and language, from the latter part of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century; and to exhibit a general view of our romances of chivalry, in their earliest and simplest form.

These romances are divided into the following classes:—1st, Romances relating to King Arthur; 2d, Anglo-Saxon romances; 3d, Anglo-Norman romances; 4th, Romances relating to Charlemagne; 5th, Romances of Oriental origin; and 6th, Miscellaneous romances.

The editor has followed, with little deviation, the plan adopted by M. Le Grand in his edition of the French Fabliaux; and has faithfully given, in plain prose, not only the general outline but even the smallest incidents

of each story: but he has thought it necessary to intersperse, throughout the narrative, such passages of the originals as appeared to him worth preserving, either from their poetical merit,—from their representing correct pictures of antient manners,—or from their being characteristic of the author's feelings, or of those of the nation.

It would be absurd to state that the subject is now exhausted. Much early poetry, both of the miscellaneous and romantic kind, doubtless remains in various libraries, and has escaped the researches of the present editor; but he has completed the object which he proposed to himself, and trusts that he has been instrumental in rendering accessible to common readers no inconsiderable portion of our early national literature.

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* By some accident this reference has been omitted in the text, where it should have been placed between the brackets, page 127, line 9.—In page 9, line 18, the reader is requested to substitute the word *support* for the word "subsist;" in page 270, note, *lolling* for "olling;", in page 273, line 16, *their* for "its;" in page 279, line 25, *names* for "ames;" in page 282, line 15, *after* for "by;" in page 306, line 22, *pertinacious* for "pertinactous."

INTRODUCTION

SECTION I.

View of the Changes which took place in the Romance or French Language, in consequence of the first Danish Invasions.—Its Preservation and Improvement by the same People after their Establishment in Normandy.—Their first Attempts at Composition.—Their Style improved by the Clergy.—Remarks on their Minstrels.

It is generally admitted that the word *Romance** was first employed to signify the Roman language as spoken in the European provinces of the empire; and that, in its most extensive sense, it comprised all the dialects of which the basis was the vulgar Latin, whatever might be the other materials which entered into their construction. The name was, therefore, equally applicable to the Italian, the Spa-

* In old French it is sometimes written *Roman*, and sometimes *Romans*, whence our English word.

nish, and French; and was sometimes, though incorrectly, applied to the vulgar languages of other countries*; but the earliest and most familiar use of the word in this island was to express that dialect of the French which had been introduced among us by the Norman conquest. It was afterwards, by an easy transition, employed to signify indiscriminately all such works as were composed in that dialect; and lastly, in consequence of the growing fondness of our Norman ancestors for tales of chivalry, became exclusively appropriated to this species of composition.

Such being the variations which have taken place in the meaning of the word, it seems necessary that we should endeavour to ascertain, at least by approximation, the dates of these changes; and it will probably appear that an inattention to this preliminary has produced much of the difference of opinion which at present prevails respecting the origin of Romantic fiction.

The best French historians inform us that the Romance began to supersede the Latin as a colloquial language in Gaul about the beginning of the ninth century. The several corruptions introduced by a succession of barbarous nations had been blended

* A remarkable instance of its application to the *English* is quoted by Mr. Ritson from Giraldus Cambrensis.

into a common mass, and gradually formed a language which, from its copiousness, from the simplicity of its grammar, and from its close analogy to the dialects of the neighbouring nations, was a more useful instrument of general intercourse than the Latin, though less suited to literary compositions, to which, in the first instance, it cannot be supposed to have been applied. Indeed the Latin could not be immediately and totally forgotten, even by the vulgar, because the greater number of its words were retained in the new jargon, and because it was still the vehicle of religious instruction; and the medium of all written contracts between individuals, as well as of all laws issued by the sovereign. Of the Romance language in this early state very few written specimens can have existed; yet, of these few, one has been fortunately preserved.

The kings of France of the second race adopted, after the example of Charlemagne, the injudicious practice of dividing their dominions among their children; whose ambition, thus excited, led to a long succession of civil discord. The sons of Louis le Debonnaire, even during his lifetime, were constantly in arms against each other, and often against their father; and their dissensions after his death produced a dreadful waste of blood during the war

which was terminated by the destructive battle of Fontenay, in June 841. It was therefore thought necessary that their reconciliation should be marked by the greatest possible degree of solemnity; their respective armies were called in as witnesses and parties to the oath by which they bound themselves to rest satisfied with the division of territory finally adjudged to each; and, that the terms of this oath might be perfectly intelligible, it was translated into the vulgar tongue of the several nations. Louis le Germanique addressed the French army of his brother in *Romance*; Charles le Chauve read his oath in the Tudesque, or Teutonic, to the soldiers of Louis; and both received the assent of the troops to the agreement in the same languages respectively. This curious monument of the Romance tongue, the most antient specimen now existing, is to be found in Lacombe's Preface to the Supplement of his Dictionnaire du Vieux Langage, and in Mr. Ritson's Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy.

It appears from this specimen that the Romance of the year 842, which very nearly resembled the present Provençal, was the general language of France, and not a southern dialect; because the provinces of Aquitaine and Neustria were the original dominions of Charles; they had been con-

firmed to him in the present treaty, and their inhabitants formed a great part of his army. At the same time the Frankish, or Teutonic, is said to have prevailed in some of the eastern provinces*, that is to say, in Franche Comté and the Lyonese, as well as in the countries bordering on the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheld.

But the uniformity of the Romance language was not of long duration. In 845, a formidable army of Danes or Normans entering the Seine, carried their depredations to the very gates of Paris; and the booty thus obtained encouraging them to fresh enterprises, they renewed them almost without intermission, and formed a permanent establishment in the western provinces, which they gradually extended till the year 912, when their usurpations were confirmed to them by a treaty with Charles the Simple. Rollo received in marriage the king's daughter Giselle, and for her dower the sovereignty of Neustria, since called Normandy, together with extensive rights in Britany, on the sole conditions of embracing Christianity, and of putting a stop to

* At the council held at Tours in 813, it was directed that the Homilies shall be translated "in rusticam linguam Romanam, aut Theotiscam;" and the same was ordered at the council of Arles in 851.

the devastations which had been continued during half a century.

From these invasions ultimately resulted the division of the Romance language into an almost infinite number of dialects, which subsisted during the greater part of the tenth century. It is not meant that the Normans materially contributed to this change, by importing into the conquered country a barbarous jargon composed of foreign and discordant materials; because it is evident that their influence in this respect must have been confined to the territory within which they formed their establishment. But uniformity of speech throughout a large extent of country can only arise from an easy and constant intercourse between its inhabitants; and the interruption of this intercourse must give birth to a diversity of dialects. The prevalence of the Latin had resulted from the extent and stability of the Roman empire; and the purity of the Romance could only have been preserved by the permanence of that of Charlemagne. His partition of his extensive territory, and the disputes amongst his immediate successors, enervated the strength of the French monarchy, and laid open the country to the ravages of the northern invaders; whose triumphs were less pernicious from the misery they

immediately produced, than from the example of successful usurpation which they held out to private ambition. France was parcelled out amongst a number of petty tyrants, always in arms against each other, or against their sovereign; and the vulgar tongue, not yet subjected to the rules of grammar, or fixed by any just models of composition, was abandoned to all the innovations which might arise either from the ignorance or from the mixed races of the inhabitants, in the several independent districts into which the country was divided.

Nor was this all. During the strange revolutions of the tenth century the whole scheme of society was essentially altered; so that it became necessary to invent new names for a great variety of new relations, and arbitrarily to enlist these barbarous words into the Latin; from whence they were again transferred into all the vulgar languages of Europe. Thus arose a new Latinity, which has given no small disturbance to modern etymologists.

It is not necessary that we should search minutely for the several causes of that scene of confusion called the feudal system; but there is one of the changes introduced by it which requires to be briefly noticed, because it has contributed to give much of their distinctive colouring to the species of compo-

sitions commonly called romances. This was the establishment of an hereditary nobility.

When the Franks took possession of Gaul, they seem to have divided the property of the conquered into *Salic* lands and military *benefices**. The former were the portions of land allotted, in the first instance, to the conquerors in absolute property. The latter were left to the original proprietors, with the reserve of a considerable part of their revenues, to defray the expenses of government; they answered the purposes of our civil list; and a certain allotment of territory formed the salaries of all the civil and military officers, who were nominated by the prince, and held their offices for life. Such *benefices* therefore were strictly *livings*, and gave their name to the benefices of the church, which they exactly resembled; and every inhabitant of the country, whether of Frankish or Gallic origin, being equally eligible to every office at the sole discretion of the sovereign, there was no permanent distinction of rank in the state, except that of prince and subject. But during the impotence of the crown under the kings of the second race, the Dukes, or governors of provinces, the Earls, or governors of towns, and some other officers of state,

* See Hénault's Remarques particulières sur la seconde Race. Ab. Chron. de l'Hist. de France.

extorted the hereditary establishment of their respective dignities in their own families; and, uniting the property of the land with the right of administering justice, became the real sovereigns of the districts over which they had before presided as temporary magistrates*. The ambition of the delegates who extorted, and the weakness of the princes who made these concessions, may be easily accounted for; but we can only explain the acquiescence of the nation in an exchange of freedom for the most complicated slavery, by the intolerable misery to which they had been reduced by the Norman invasions. Indeed, the Norman writers tell us that Rollo was compelled to stipulate for the grant of certain rents in Britany, because it was impossible, in consequence of the ravages committed by his own orders, or those of his predecessors, to subsist his army in the fertile province of Normandy.

But these ferocious men had no sooner settled themselves in their conquests, than they eagerly adopted, and cultivated with the greatest care, the language of the vanquished. William I., the im-

* The establishment of this monstrous system is usually placed under the reign of Raoul, who was raised to the throne of France A. D. 923.

mediate successor of Rollo, being desirous that his son Richard should acquire some knowledge of the Danish, found it necessary to have him educated at Baieux, rather than at Rouen, where the Romance had already obtained a decided preference*; and it was to the capital of Normandy that the French were indebted for the preservation of their vulgar tongue, which there found an asylum under an active and vigorous government; while France itself, till near the end of the tenth century, was torn to pieces by contending factions. It continued indeed to be spoken at Paris; but its general diffusion over Europe was the work of the Normans. By them it was first employed in composition; and it may perhaps be fairly assumed, that the people of Picardy, and of the other provinces to the north of the Loire, whose dialects had already a mixture of the Teutonic, would readily assimilate them to the speech of a neighbouring province, whose inhabitants had astonished the world by the unexampled splendour of their conquests.

The earliest specimen of northern French literature is a metrical life of Wandril and of some other saints, translated from the Latin by Thibaut de Vernon, Canon of Rouen, about the middle, per-

* See Dudon of St. Quentin, p. 83. ed. Duchesne.

haps, of the eleventh century*; but no copy of this work has yet been discovered. The next in point of antiquity, according to the French historians, was the poem on the first crusade, compiled from the Latin chronicles of the time by the Chevalier Bechada of Limoges. This, however, has been also lost; but the dialect in which it was written may be inferred from his having undertaken it by the advice of Gaubert, a Norman. It is supposed to have been begun about the year 1112, and finished about 1125; and admitting this date, it is less antient than the first work of Philippe de Than, called the "Liber de Creaturis," a French metrical treatise on chronology, written soon after the year 1106, and described by the Abbé de la Rue. Another work by the same, is a poem on natural history, translated from the *Bestiarius*, and finished after 1121: after which we have the Proverbs of Solomon in verse, by Samson de Nanteuil; a British and Anglo-Saxon history, by Geoffroi Gaimar; and a history of Henry I., alluded to in that poem as the composition of one David; all written, as the Abbé de la Rue very reasonably supposes, during the reign of Stephen.

* M. de la Rue says, "*a long time before the conquest;*" M. de la Ravaillere, on the contrary, seems to place Thibaut's work about 1108. Yet they both cite the same authority, viz. Vol. III. p. 379. of the Benedictine historians.

This series of facts and dates seems to lead to the following conclusions: First, that the northern Romance, or Norman French, was not employed as a written language till very near the time of the conquest; and secondly, that, during about an hundred years which elapsed between the middle of the eleventh century and the accession of Henry II. in 1154, all the principal compositions in that language were either devotional and moral tracts, lives of saints, scientific treatises, or chronicles. All of these were metrical; and generally, perhaps universally, translations. The minor compositions were, probably, much more numerous; and seem to have consisted of war songs, satirical songs, encomiastic songs, and of something like historical ballads. Of the first class, the most celebrated instance is the *chanson de Rolland**, which was sung by the minstrel Taillefer at the battle of Hastings: the *serventois* or satirical songs seem to have formed

* The late Mr. Ritson, in his Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy, p. xxxvi, has said, "The real chanson de Rolland was, *unquestionably*, a metrical romance, of great length, upon the fatal battle of Roncevaux, of which Taillefer only chanted a part." He probably meant no more than that he did not wish the assertion to be questioned. William of Malmesbury, whom he quotes, says, "CANTILENA *Rollandi inchoatâ*, &c." which seems to mean a song, and not a *metrical romance of great length.*

a principal amusement of the armies during the first crusade*; and they may be presumed to have abounded so as to give great offence in England, since Henry I., surnamed *le Beau-clerc*, either on account of his literary attainments or in honour of his liberal patronage, thought fit to punish a satirist, the Chevalier Luc de la Barre, by putting out his eyes†. The number of encomiastic songs may be inferred from the extensive largesses to minstrels which are recorded during this period; and the contemporary writers not unfrequently cite the historical‡ ballads of the time as authorities for occa-

* La Ravaillere, Vol. I. p. 260. who transcribes a passage in the Gesta Dei per Francos, p. 180. in proof of the fact.

† Abbé de la Rue. Archæol. Vol. XII. p. 301.

‡ Ordericus Vitalis, speaking of St. William, says, "Vulgo *canitur a joculatoribus de illo* CANTILENA: sed juxta præferenda est relatio authentica quæ a religiosis doctoribus solerter est edita, et a studiosis lectoribus reverenter lecta est, in communi fratrum audientiâ. Scriptores Norman. ap. Duchesne, p. 598." This *relatio authentica*, of which Ordericus gives an abridgement, seems to have formed the devotional romance of Guillaume au Court-nez, a French commander employed by Charlemagne against the Saracens in Spain, and rewarded for his services by a present of the duchy of Aquitaine. St. William ended his days in a cloister. His romance, according to Le Grand, was written in Provençal by a Troubadour, as was also Philumena, which contains some military anecdotes of Charlemagne. See Preface aux Fabliaux, &c.

sional anecdotes. But it may be safely affirmed that no trace of a professed work of fiction; no semblance of an epic fable; in short, no specimen of what we should now call a romance, is to be found before the middle of the twelfth century; indeed this period might, perhaps, be still further extended.

The preceding list, it is true, can only be admitted as negative evidence; and it may be objected, that many writers are likely to have existed besides those whose works have been preserved, or whose names have been accidentally recorded by their surviving contemporaries: it may also be contended, that the minstrels of those times, who, like their predecessors the Bards and Scalds, were accustomed to preserve in their traditional rhymes various anecdotes of religious as well as military history, may be supposed to have formed a certain stock of fabulous narratives, which they recited for the amusement of a less devout or more indolent class of hearers.

To the first of these objections it would be easy to find an answer, if it were necessary to inquire into the subject of compositions whose existence, though certainly possible, is not very probable: but the second objection may deserve to be examined at large, although we are unable after all to offer any thing more than a conjectural history of what

may be called the traditional literature of this period.

That a class of men who cultivated the arts of amusement as a profession, were known and esteemed by the Normans at the time of the conquest, is undeniably proved by the evidence of Domesday-book; in which we find a certain BERDIC possessed of a large tract of land in Gloucestershire, under the title of *joculator regis*. The register, of course, does not explain the talents of this joculator, or jougleur; but it may be fairly assumed that they were similar to those of the minstrel Taillefer, who, as Wace informs us, "moult bien chantout," and who preceded the Duke of Normandy at the battle of Hastings, "singing about Charlemagne, and Rolland, and Olivier, and the vassals who died at Roncesvalles." We are further informed by Gaimar, that he performed many marvellous feats of dexterity: throwing his lance into the air as if it were a small stick; catching it by the point before he cast it against the enemy; and repeating the same operation with his sword, so that they who beheld him considered him as a conjurer—

L'un dit à l'altre ki 'co veit,
Ke co esteit enchantement,
Ke cil fesait devant la gent,
Quant, &c.

Now, unless it could be proved that the Normans adopted the profession of minstrelsy from the French, of which there is no evidence, it must follow that they carried it with them from Denmark; and as Bishop Percy has shown that a character nearly analogous existed amongst the Danes as well as the Anglo-Saxons, the derivation of the minstrels from the *Scalds* and *Glee-men* of the North, as established in the Essay prefixed to the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," seems to rest upon as fair historical testimony as can be required in confirmation of such an opinion.

It may, therefore, be reasonably admitted that Rollo carried with him his domestic bards, who, when their native idiom began to fall into disuse, would have been compelled to exercise their talents in the newly-adopted language; but still the success of their poetical efforts must have depended on the state in which they found this language, to the perfection of which they could not, from their want of learning, materially contribute.

It is true that the first progress of mankind, from a rude and uncouth jargon to settled forms of speech, has been, in almost every country, attributed to poetry. Hence the deification of the Muses, the fable of Orpheus, and various allegories all over the world. In fact, however savage a

society may be, it certainly must be composed of the two sexes; and it is at least probable that the males will sometimes amuse themselves by courting the females, and sometimes by fighting with each other, either from rivalry, or from ambition, or from the mere honour and glory of producing destruction. Love and war, therefore, to which perhaps we may add the hopes and fears suggested by superstition, will afford the first themes for the efforts of infant language; and as every language must be composed of sounds varying in quantity, or in accent, or susceptible of alliteration, or distinguishable into pauses by the recurrence of rhyme, all of which expedients afford the means of fixing a series of short sentences in the memory, it is not easy to conceive a nation which does not possess some rudiments of poetry. Verse, therefore, is anterior to prose, because our passions are anterior to reason and judgment; because vocal sounds are the natural expressions of emotion, not of reflection; and because the analysis of thought is the result of long abstraction. It is true that the poet, during the progress of civilization, may assist in promoting not only the beauty but the accuracy of language, by the vivid illustration of metaphor, and by nice distinctions in the shades of expression: but admitting that such a poetical spirit is to be

found in the Danish Scalds, it does not follow that it was or could be transmitted to the Norman minstrels.

It must be remembered that the Romance tongue was, in its origin, a corruption of the Latin, and required nothing more for the purpose of adapting it to every species of composition than a nearer assimilation to its parent language, which, from frequent use in the most familiar intercourse of letters, as well as in all legal contracts, had gradually adopted a grammar perfectly analogous to that of the colloquial dialects of Europe. We should therefore expect to see this improvement, so soon as the learned, that is to say, the clergy, should find themselves interested in opening to the illiterate, through the medium of the vulgar tongue, those stores of literature to which they alone had access. Now it is difficult to imagine a concurrence of circumstances more likely to excite this interest, than that which took place towards the close of the eleventh and the commencement of the twelfth century. It was then that the madness of pilgrimage, which had long prevailed among the Normans, and had carried, in 1064, a body of seventy thousand fanatics into the Holy Land, became epidemical throughout Europe, and produced the first crusade (in 1096), which, by placing a Chris-

tian prince on the throne of Jerusalem, led the way to a long succession of these holy expeditions.

Whatever may have been the means employed by Peter the Hermit, and afterwards by St. Bernard, to excite a spirit of enthusiasm, which was, in various ways, so beneficial to the church, it was evidently important that the clergy in general should be furnished with the means of enforcing, as widely as possible, the most persuasive arguments in its favour; and consequently that the vulgar tongue should become a principal object of clerical attention. Since, therefore, the earliest French compositions which we possess are generally, if not universally, translations; and since their authors, when not distinguished by any ecclesiastical titles, usually qualify themselves by the appellation of *clercs*, a name expressive of their pretensions to some erudition; it seems unreasonable to assign, without any authority, to an unlearned class of men, the anterior invention of works of fiction; a species of composition which may be termed the luxury of literature, usually growing out of and indicating a large previous stock of necessary and useful learning.

The following may perhaps be accepted as a tolerable summary of the history of the minstrels. It appears likely that they were carried by Rollo

into France, where they probably introduced a certain number of their native traditions; those, for instance, relating to Ogier le Danois, and other northern heroes, who were afterwards enlisted into the tales of chivalry; but that, being deprived of the mythology of their original religion, and cramped perhaps, as well by the sober spirit of christianity, as by the imperfection of a language whose tameness was utterly inapplicable to the sublime obscurity of their native poetry, they were obliged to adopt various modes of amusing, and to unite the talents of the mimic and the juggler, as a compensation for the defects of the musician and poet. Their musical skill, however, if we may judge from the number of their instruments, of which very formidable catalogues are to be found in every description of a royal festival, may not have been contemptible; and their poetry, even though confined to short compositions, was not likely to be void of interest to their hearers, while employed on the topics of flattery or satire. Their rewards were certainly, in some cases, enormous, and prove the esteem in which they were held; though this may be partly ascribed to the general thirst after amusement, and the difficulty experienced by the great in dissipating the tediousness of life; so that the gift of three parishes in Gloucestershire, assigned by

[redacted]eror for the support of his *jocu-*
[redacted]s be a less accurate measure of
[redacted]e minstrel's accomplishments than of the mo-
narch's power and of the insipidity of his court.

To the talents already enumerated the minstrels added, soon after the birth of French literature, the important occupation of the *diseur* or *declaimer*. Perhaps the declamation of metrical compositions might have required, during their first state of imperfection, some kind of chant, and even the assistance of some musical instruments, to supply the deficiencies of the measure; perhaps the aids of gesture and pantomime * may have been necessary [redacted]o relieve the monotony of a long recitation: but at [redacted]ll events it is evident, that an author who wrote for [redacted]he public at large, during the eleventh, twelfth, and [redacted]hirteenth centuries, was not less dependent for his [redacted]uccess on the minstrels, than a modern writer of [redacted]ragedy or comedy on the players of the present day. [redacted]copyist might multiply manuscripts for the supply convent-libraries; but while ecclesiastics alone [redacted]ere able to read, there was no access to the ears

* The minstrels are not unfrequently called *mimi*. Ordericus Vitalis, describing a contemporary character, says, "Erat enim in militia promptus, in dando nimis prodigus, gaudens ludis et luxibus, *mimis*, *equis*, *et canibus*, *aliisque hujusmodi vanitatibus*. p. 598.

of a military nobility, without [redacted] a body of men who travelled in e[redacted] who were everywhere welcomed as the promote[redacted] of mirth and conviviality.

The next step was easy. Being compelled to a frequent exercise of their talent in extemporaneous compositions, the minstrels were probably, like the *improvisatori* of Italy, at least equal, if not superior, to more learned writers, in the merely mechanical parts of poetry; they were also better judges of the public taste. By the progress of translation they became the depositaries of nearly all the knowledge of the age, which was committed to their memory: it was natural, therefore, that they should form a variety of new combinations from the numerous materials in their possession; and it will be shown hereafter, that many of our most popular romances were most probably brought by their efforts to the state in which we now see them. This was the most splendid æra of their history, and seems to have comprehended the latter part of the twelfth and perhaps the whole of the thirteenth century. After that time, from the general progress of instruction, the number of readers began to increase; and the metrical romances were insensibly supplanted by romances in prose, whose monotony neither required nor could derive much assistance

from the art of declamation. The visits of the minstrels had been only periodical, and generally confined to the great festivals of the year; but the resources, such as they were, of the ponderous prose-legend were always accessible. Thus began the decline of a body of men, whose complete degradation seems to have been the subsequent result of their own vices. During the period of their success they had most impudently abused the credulity of the public; but it is a whimsical fact, that the same fables which were discredited while in verse, were again, on their transfusion into prose, received without suspicion. It should seem that falsehood is generally safe from detection, when concealed under a sufficient cloak of dulness.

SECTION II.

First Romances merely Metrical Histories.—Origin of Romantic Fiction ascribed by Bishop Percy to the Northern Nations—by Mr. Warton to the Arabians—by others attributed to the Celtic Tribes of Armorica, Wales, &c.—Attempt to reconcile these Opinions.—Probability that the first French Romances were written in England.—Authorities in Support of this Supposition.

THE opinions delivered in the preceding section would perhaps require for their confirmation a regular analysis of the state of French literature during the latter half of the twelfth century; but as this has been accurately made by La Ravaillere* and the Abbé de la Rue†, it will be sufficient in this place to state, that nearly all the romances of that period which still exist, comprehending the various works of Wace, Benoit de St. More, Alex-

* Revol. de la Langue Françoise, &c. prefixed to an edition of the Chansons du Roi de Navarre.

† See Archæologia, vol. xii. pp. 50 and 297.

andre de Paris, and others cited by Fauchet, profess to be chronicles or true histories, and are known to have been translated or imitated from the Latin. Thus, for instance, Wace's Brut was a version of Geoffrey of Monmouth; le Roman d'Alexandre, of the Vita Alexandri by Gautier de l'Isle; Benoit's Trojan War was imitated from Dictys Cretensis and others; and the romances respecting Charlemagne are copied, at least in part, from the Latin Chronicle of the imaginary Turpin.

The mode of translation adopted by these early romancers was indeed rather licentious, as they were satisfied with giving the substance of the story as intelligibly as they could, reserving to themselves the liberty of contracting what they thought too diffuse, of omitting what they considered as unnecessary, and of enlarging such passages as appeared most important. But they were generally attentive to the style of their original, and seldom lost an opportunity of enriching their work by an exact imitation of the most gaudy and splendid descriptions which they found in their way; so that it would often be easy to trace them, even in their compilations, by a comparison of the style of the Latin authors whom they consulted. For instance, M. de la Rue, speaking of Benoit, says, "The author often presents us with certain turns and

images which are truly poetical. Of this an idea may be formed by his description of spring, at the beginning of which Rollo quitted England for Neustria:

Quant li ivers fu trepasser,
Vint li duls tens, e li ester;
Venta l'aure sueve et quoie,
Chanta li merles et la treie;
Bois reverdirent e prael,
E gent florirent li ramel;
Parut la rose buen olanz,
E altre flors de maint semblanz*."

Now Dudo of St. Quentin, in relating the same event, prefaces his account by a description very nearly similar. His words are: "Cum autem primæ æstatis tempore, rutilantium molliter florum arrideret copia, purpureisque blattis lactea et odorifera alberent lilia, memor semper visionis monentis ad Franciam proficisci, [Rollo] classibus velis datis, navem conscendit †."

It may perhaps be proper to observe in this place, that among the poems attributed to Wace by the Abbé de la Rue is one (le Chevalier au Lion) which Mr. Ritson pronounces to be the original of Yvain

* Archæol. vol. xii. p. 315.

† Script. Norm. ap. Duchesne, p. 73.

and Gawain. If this be true*, as it abounds with an unusual number of marvellous adventures, though its actors be personages who were formerly supposed to belong to real history, it may perhaps be considered as belonging to an intermediate class between the earliest, which may be called the historical romances, and the purely fabulous romances composed by the minstrels in the thirteenth century.

Having thus far attempted to trace the progress of romance-literature in general; we may now proceed to inquire more particularly into that class of compositions which has furnished to the Italians a new and splendid species of epic poetry, and which afforded, even in the ruder hands of our Norman ancestors, many ingenious attempts at something like an epic fable.

Various theories have been proposed for the purpose of explaining the origin of romantic fiction, which has been successively ascribed to the Scandinavians, to the Arabians, and to the Armoricans, while some authors have supposed it to be of Pro-

* This romance is supposed by Fauchet to have been written by Chretien de Troyes, by whom it was very probably much enlarged. The same poet is said to have composed the Sangreal, the Chevalier à l'Epée (though this is probably a mistake), La Charette, &c. He flourished about 1190.

vençal, and others of Norman invention. Bishop Percy, to whose elegant taste we are indebted for the "Reliques of ancient English Poetry," the most agreeable selection, perhaps, which exists in any language, has prefixed to his third volume a short but masterly dissertation, in which he assigns to the Scalds the honour of having produced the earliest specimens in this mode of composition. He observes that these poets, the historians of the north, as the Bards were of Gaul and Britain, continued for a time the faithful depositaries of their domestic annals; but that at a subsequent period, when history was consigned to plain prose, they gradually attempted to "set off their recitals by such marvellous fictions as were calculated to captivate gross and ignorant minds. Thus began stories of adventures with giants, and dragons, and witches, and enchanters, and all the monstrous extravagances of wild imagination, unguided by judgment and uncorrected by art." He contends that the vital spirit of chivalry, its enthusiastic valour, its love of adventure, and its extravagant courtesy, are to be found in the Scaldic songs; that these characteristic qualities existed in the manners of the northern nations long before the establishment of knighthood as a regular order; that the superstitious opinions of these people, respecting fairies and other

preternatural beings, were extremely analogous to the later fictions of romance; that the migration of a certain number of Scalds into France, as attendants on Rollo's army, is at least extremely probable; and that, since the first mention of the stories of chivalry occurs in the song of a Norman minstrel at the battle of Hastings, this filiation of romance is equally consonant to history and to probability.

The only rational objection, perhaps, which can be adduced against this system is, that it is too exclusive. The History of Charlemagne, it is true, appears to have been very early in favour with the Normans, because the song of Rollo certainly, and that of St. William very possibly, were anterior to the conquest; and it is also likely that these and other fragments of traditional poetry may have contributed the principal materials of those longer works which, at a much later period, formed the regular romances of Renaud de Montauban, Fierabras, Otuel, Ferragus, and the other heroes of Charlemagne. But this does not account for the much more numerous and popular fictions concerning Arthur and his knights, which occupy not only so many of the romances, but also of the lays and fabliaux, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

and are evidently derived, as the learned editor very candidly acknowledges, from a different source. Besides, though the manners of chivalry, as exhibited in the Rollands and Oliviers, are common to the Launcelots and Tristrams, nothing can be more opposite than the morals of the heroines; and the frailties of an Yseult or a Guenever afford a lamentable contrast to the severe chastity of a northern beauty. But surely, in surveying a system of fictions in which love and war are the chief agents, it is impossible to abstract our attention altogether from the delineations of female character.

We must confess, however, that Bishop Percy has fairly traced one class of romantic fictions to the traditional songs of the Norman minstrels. These songs, as it is supposed, are now lost; but it is not impossible that some of them may yet be detected among the very miscellaneous contents of our early manuscripts. Le Grand has prefixed to the fabliau of "Les trois Chevaliers et la Chemise," a fragment which breathes the genuine spirit of the Gothic odes; and which, whether it be an original or translated from some northern saga, evinces that the Normans continued to preserve, during at least two centuries, a fondness for the peculiar poetry of their ancestors. The fragment here alluded to has

been translated by Mr. Way under the title of "The Gentle Bachelor."

The second hypothesis has been adopted by Mr. Warton, who, not contented with referring to the Arabians the many changes in European manners which took place about the time of the crusades, has attempted, in a long and laboured dissertation, to prove that the same people had laid the foundations of these changes at a much earlier period, by their conquest of Spain in the eighth century. He supposes that their opinions found an entry into France through the ports of Toulon and Marseilles, whence they travelled (probably by land) into Italy. In the same manner they might get to Britany, though after a long journey, and, being received with peculiar kindness in that province, would find an easy passage to Wales.

It is unnecessary to examine much at length the merits of a theory, of which the substance has been ably refuted by Bishop Percy in the later editions of his essay. Yet, although Mr. Warton has carried to an extravagant length the supposed influence of Arabian invention, and though he is often misled by fanciful analogies, we must not infer, with a modern critic *, that his opinions are

* See Mr. Ritson's Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy, passim.

totally unfounded. If Gerbert (afterwards Pope Sylvester II.) introduced the Arabic numerals into France, at least a century before the crusades, and, having by his wonderful skill in mechanics, acquired in Spain, composed a clock, was therefore considered as a magician; if judicial astrology, a science of Arabian invention, was about the same time generally disseminated through Europe; if the practice of medicine, to which we have so many allusions in our early romances, was exclusively taught in the Saracen schools,—it cannot be absurd to suppose that the opinions and prejudices of mankind were considerably modified by these sciences; that they may have had some influence on literature as well as on manners; and that the innovations in both were anterior to the crusades. The first of these fanatical expeditions was undertaken, not against the Arabian califs, but against the Turcoman usurpers of their authority; and so long as the descendants of Mahomet retained their power, the commercial as well as the devotional intercourse between Europe and the Saracen dominions was easy and uninterrupted. Such an intercourse has usually some effect on the manners of men. Perhaps, too, it would be no disparagement to the learned professors of medicine, who were principally Jews, to conjecture that they might have employed some

intervals of severer study in acquiring, and might occasionally soothe the distress of their patients by reciting, Arabian tales of amusement. A collection of such tales, we know, compiled by Petrus Alfonsus, a converted Jew *, was published in Latin under the title of "Clericalis Disciplina," early in the twelfth century, and translated, perhaps about the close of the same century, under the title of "Le Castoiement d'un Pere à son Fils;" and it is by no means improbable that many more fabliaux † may have been borrowed from the same nation.

The third hypothesis, which supposes Britany to be the native country of romantic fiction, has been, with some modifications, adopted by Mr. Leyden in his very able Introduction to the "Complaint of Scotland;" and has the advantage of being free from the objections which have been made to the preceding theories. Similarity of language

* See Appendix, No. I.

† The words *roman*, *fabliau*, and *lai*, are so often used indifferently by the old French writers, that it is difficult to lay down any positive rule for discriminating between them. But I believe that the word *roman* particularly applies to such works as were supposed to be strictly historical. Such are the romances of Arthur, Charlemagne, Alexander, The Trojan War, &c. The *fabliaux* were generally stories supposed to have been invented for the purpose of illustrating some moral; or real anecdotes capable of

proves the similar origin of the Armoricans, and of the natives of this island; and the British historians, such as they are, affirm that a large colony of fugitives from Saxon tyranny took refuge in Britany, and carried with them such of their archives as had escaped the fury of their conquerors. The Norman poets themselves frequently profess to have derived their stories from a Breton original; and their positive testimony seems sufficient to prove that the memory of Arthur and his knights was preserved in Armorica no less than in Wales and Cornwall. With respect to the tales of Charlemagne and his imaginary peers, unless we suppose them to have been imported by the Normans from Scandinavia, we must refer them to Britany; because the Bretons were the first people of France with whom the Normans had any friendly intercourse, their province having been attached as a sort of fief

being so applied. The *lai*, according to Le Grand, chiefly differed from the fabliaux, in being interspersed with musical interludes; but I suspect that they were generally translations from the British. The word is said to be derived from *leudus*; but *laoi* seems to be the general name of a class of Irish metrical compositions, as "Laoi na Seilge" and others, quoted by Mr. Walker (Hist. Mem. of Irish Bards), and it may be doubted whether the word was not formerly common to the Welsh and Armorican dialects.

to Normandy at the first settlement of that duchy under Rollo. It is not improbable, as I have already mentioned, that a mutual exchange of traditions may have introduced Ogier and other Danish heroes to the court of Charlemagne; and perhaps a similar commerce between the bards of Wales and Britany may have given to Arthur his Sir Launcelot and other French worthies. The supposition that some traditional anecdotes concerning these two princes of romance were already current among the Normans, would explain the facility with which the very suspicious chronicles of Geoffrey and Turpin were received, and the numerous amplifications by which they were, after their translation into French, almost immediately embellished.

The reader will perceive that the preceding systems are by no means incompatible, and that there is no absurdity in supposing that the scenes and characters of our romantic histories were very generally, though not exclusively, derived from the Bretons, or from the Welsh of this island; that much of the colouring, and perhaps some particular adventures, may be of Scandinavian origin; and that occasional episodes, together with part of the machinery, may have been borrowed from the Arabians. In fact, there is reason to believe that

critics, in their survey of Gothic literature, as well as of Gothic architecture, have too hastily had recourse to a single hypothesis, for the purpose of explaining the probable origin of forms and proportions which appeared unusual, and of ornaments which were thought to arise from a wild and capricious fancy: and in both cases it will perhaps be found that invention is often nothing more than accidental association, and that what has been attributed to originality of design, was only the result of an awkward attempt to combine incongruous materials. The first writers of romance were copyists and translators; the *Trouveurs*, their successors, as the name literally implies, were simply *finders*, and used all that they found, without caring whence it was gleaned, or much troubling themselves about the usual restraints of chronology or geography. That theory, therefore, which is the most comprehensive, and which embraces all the avenues of information to which the writers of the twelfth century can be supposed to have had access, has, so far, the greatest appearance of probability.

But before we adopt this or any other hypothesis, it will be proper to satisfy ourselves respecting the country which produced the first romances; because the materials employed in their construction

are likely to have depended very much on the feelings and prejudices of the persons who used them.

It is certainly natural to assume, in the first instance, that whatever is French must have been written in France; but such an assumption with respect to the period which has hitherto engaged our attention, when the same language was spoken at the courts of Paris and London, would be very problematical without the support of some direct evidence. We know that Alexandre de Bernay, a Norman, wrote at Paris; but that Benoit, who prides himself on being a Frenchman, wrote in England: we know also, from the confession of the poets themselves, that profit was, at least as much as fame, the object of their pursuit; and it is reasonable to conclude that writers flocked in greatest numbers to the court where they were most in request, and were likely to be most liberally rewarded. Now it is evident that the Dukes of Normandy, when possessed of the crown of England, were incomparably more wealthy, though not in the same proportion more powerful, than the contemporary Kings of France; and it may be presumed that the crowd of candidates for their patronage was, consequently, much more numerous. Our Henry the

Second possessed, in right of his father, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine; in right of his wife Eleanor, divorced by Louis le Jeune, the countries of Poictou and Guienne; in right of his mother Matilda, Normandy and England; and his power in the latter, the most valuable part of his dominions, was paramount and uncontrolled, while Louis was surrounded by powerful and rival vassals. We are therefore justified in suspecting that the courts of our Norman sovereigns, rather than those of the kings of France, produced the birth of romance literature; and this suspicion is confirmed by the testimony of three French writers, whose authority is the more conclusive because they have formed their opinion from separate and independent premises.

The first of these is M. de la Ravaillere. In his Essay on the Revolutions of the French Language, a work of considerable learning, supported by original authorities, whose words he almost constantly quotes, he distinctly asserts that the pretended patronage of the French princes anterior to Philippe Auguste had no visible effect on their domestic literature; that while so many poets were entertained at the courts of the Anglo-Norman princes, no one can be traced to that of Louis le Jeune;

that the chronicles of Britain and Normandy, the subjects chosen by Wace and his contemporaries, were not likely to *interest* the French; but that "the esteem in which the kings of England held the French language was likely to be soon communicated to the Court of France*."

The second authority is M. le Comte de Tressan, a writer perhaps of no deep research, but whose good taste is conclusive on points of internal evidence. In his preface to the prose-romance of "La Fleur des Batailles" (one of those relating to Charlemagne) he says, "The style and character of these romances lead us to think that they were composed at the court of the English kings descended from William the Conqueror. We find, in those of the round table, a marked affectation of dwelling on every thing which can contribute to the glory of the throne and court of England, whose princes and knights always play the chief and most brilliant part in the piece. Indeed, we cannot behold without some sentiments of indignation, the greatest of mankind degraded far below the rank which he occupies in real history. Charlemagne's

* Mais l'estime que les Rois d'Angleterre, maîtres de la Normandie, firent de nôtre langue, dut bientôt passer à la Cour de France. Vol. I. p. 157.

character in romance is often unworthy of the hero. We see him almost without authority in his court, and unable to take a single step without the consent of his twelve peers. Yet we learn from history that never was prince more absolute than Charlemagne. We must therefore distinguish, in these romances, two different æras as well as characters: the *first* is that of *their composition in verse*, during the reigns of William's successors, princes always interested in casting a shade over the splendour of the French court and monarchy: the *second* is that when these romances, reduced to prose, were accommodated to the opinions subsisting at the time of their *refabrication*."—Thirdly, the Abbé de la Rue may be considered as having proved the fact, by pointing out, in English history, the persons to whom the original poems were addressed. His three dissertations on the Anglo-Norman poets, in the twelfth and thirteenth volumes of the Archæologia, will convince the reader that no man has studied with more attention the early history and poetry of France; and he has given it as his decided opinion, that "*it was from England and Normandy that the French received the first works, which deserve to be cited, in their language.*"

Having thus narrowed the question, by removing

many of the collateral difficulties, we may now proceed in our investigation, the minuteness and prolixity of which it is hoped the reader will pardon, because the change which we are endeavouring to trace was insensible at the time of its taking place, and, being therefore incapable of receiving direct historical evidence, can only be ascertained by circuitous reasoning.

SECTION III.

Researches of the Normans concerning British History.—Materials to which they had access.—Gildas.—Nennius.—British Traditions rejected by William of Malmesbury, but adopted by others.—Summary of the British Chronicle by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

From the relative wealth and extent of England and Normandy, it could not fail to result that the native country of the conquerors must become, after a certain time, a province to that of the conquered. Thus the residence of William and of his successors in England, which was at first necessary for the security of their power, was gradually fixed there by habit and inclination; their followers acquired an attachment to the island which contained their property; and the learned began, about the reign of Stephen, to feel interested about the history and antiquities of a country which they henceforth considered as their own.

The story of the conquest of Britain by the Saxons, as told by themselves, is so marvellous,

that it could be received with implicit credit only by persons very strongly prejudiced in their favour: but we are very sure that the current of Norman prejudices had an opposite direction. It may therefore be presumed that, if they generally adopted the narrative of Bede, and contented themselves with supplying from Saxon materials the interval which had elapsed since his death, it was because they found it impossible to extort, from the British writers Gildas and Nennius; a consistent and probable history.

Gildas, whom Mr. Gibbon has very happily termed the British Jeremiah, is reported to have been one of the many sons of Caw, a prince or chieftain among the Strath-cluyd Britons, and to have distinguished himself during his youth by many acts of valour in the wars of his countrymen with the Northumbrian Saxons. After the fatal defeat of Cattraeth, he fled into South Wales, where he spent his old age in acts of devotion, and opened a school at Bangor, where he perhaps wrote his history. He died, at an advanced age, in or about 570; so that his birth must be placed very early in the sixth century: he therefore had the means of compiling, had he thought fit, a narrative of the most interesting scenes in our early annals, of which he was an eye-witness. But his book of "Lamen-

tations over the Destruction of Britain" is little more than a whining elegy, and his "Epistle" a virulent and frantic satire on the miseries and vices of his countrymen. His style is so turgid and hyperbolical that it is always obscure, and sometimes unintelligible; and his Latin prose has the air of being translated or closely imitated from the metaphors of some barbarous poetry. Perhaps, indeed, this resemblance may not be quite fanciful. Mr. Williams, an intelligent Welsh antiquary, has conjectured that Gildas the historian is no other than the poet Aneurin under an assumed ecclesiastical appellation. The same exploits are ascribed to both, the same parentage, and the same period to their lives: but the strongest foundation for the hypothesis is, that whereas all the Welsh genealogies agree in placing Gildas and Aneurin separately among the sons of Caw, no one is found to comprehend them both. It would be some consolation to the reader of Gildas, if he were permitted to embrace this opinion, as he might then find, in the animated poetry of the bard, some indemnification for the exaggerated expressions and apparently distorted facts by which he is disgusted when they flow from the pen of a sober and reverend historian.

Nennius, the MSS. of whose work often bear

the name of Gildas, appears to have written about the middle of the ninth century. Though merely a compiler; though extremely credulous; though ready to adopt every British tradition; he might still, from the antiquity of his materials, be valuable to an inquisitive historian, if we possessed a perfect and pure copy of his work. It is said that such a copy exists in the Vatican library, and that a transcript from it is intended for publication by the Rev. William Gunn of Norwich: but there is every reason to believe that those to which the Normans had access, as well as the copies since edited by Gale and Bertram, were extremely incorrect, and disfigured by numerous interpolations.

Besides these regular histories, it appears that Welsh traditions were offered in great abundance to the Norman antiquaries; because William of Malmesbury, after quoting the "Gesta Britonum," by which he seems to mean the narrative of Nennius, as of good authority, takes notice of other relations, which he treats with utter contempt, as *visionary trifles* and *lying dreams**. But the mar-

* It is remarkable that, in the very same sentence, he adopts from Nennius the story of Arthur's having slain, in one battle, 900 Saxons with his own hand. So capricious was the incredulity of our early critics! The story here quoted is in the sixty-third chapter of Nennius.

vellous is sure to find admirers in an age of credulity; and what had offended the good sense of this writer was eagerly accepted by less scrupulous and discerning critics. Walter Calenius, arch-deacon of Oxford, collected with great assiduity, during his travels in Armorica, a considerable mass of British materials, which he put into the hands of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with a request that he would translate and publish them; and Geoffrey, readily entering into the views and adopting the prejudices of his patron, executed his task by composing a Chronicle of Britain in Latin prose, and a Life of the Caledonian Merlin in Latin hexameters. He also appears to have meditated the translation of a third work on the migration of the British clergy to Armorica; which perhaps he did not live, or had not leisure, to complete*.

These performances are so closely connected with the history of Romance, that it is scarcely possible to understand the subject without some knowledge of their contents. But one of them is a MS. which many would be unable to decypher; and though the other, having been printed and translated, is more accessible, it is not quite fair to

* He says, lib. viii. cap. 2. "Sed hæc alias referam, cum librum de exulatione eorum transtulero."

expect from the reader the perusal of a chronicle, the length of which is by no means compensated by its veracity. Perhaps, therefore, it may be more convenient to give, in this place, a very short and general abstract of both compositions.

The Chronicle is divided into nine books, of which the first, containing nearly a third of the whole work, extends from the birth of Brutus to the introduction of Christianity into this island. Brutus, the son of Silvius, and grandson of Ascanius, being exiled from Italy for having accidentally slain his father, takes refuge in Greece, where he finds the posterity of Helenus reduced to a state of slavery. He puts himself at their head; repeatedly defeats the armies of Pandrasus, king of the country; and ultimately extorts from him the hand of his only daughter Ignoge, together with the bridal present of a large navy, with which he embarks in quest of adventures. After various exploits among the Greek islands, and in Mauritania, he passes the Pillars of Hercules; arrives at the mouth of the Loire; finds in Aquitaine a second body of Trojan exiles under the command of Corinæus, a great giant-killer, who joins his fortunes. France, at that time, was governed by *twelve peers**, and had

* Tunc erant duodecim reges in Galliâ, quorum regimine tota regio pari potestate regebatur. Lib. i. c. 8.

a regular system of *game-laws** ; for infringing which Corinæus was assaulted by the Duke of Aquitaine. Brutus and Corinæus defeat his forces; lay waste his country; carry off an immense booty; put to sea, and arrive in Albion, then uninhabited except by a few giants, who principally frequented the southern promontory of the island. Corinæus, taking delight in the chace of such creatures, makes choice of this promontory for his residence, the rest of the island being allotted to his companion. Brutus now, for the first time, recollects that he is married to the beautiful Ignoge, and becomes the father of three sons, Locrine, Albanach, and Camber; who, dividing the kingdom after his death, give their names to the three great divisions of the island, Loegria, Albania, and Cambria. The very uninteresting history of his fabulous descendants is a little enlivened by some amusing episodes; such as the loves of Locrine and Estreldis (cap. 13.); the tale of King Læir and his three daughters (c. 15.); that of Ferrex and Porrex (c. 16.); and the romantic adventures of Brennus, the famous conqueror of Rome, whom Geoffrey has very providently claimed as a British hero (c. 17, 18, 19.). He was the son of Dunvallo

* *Statutum enim ab antiquo* fuerat, neminem, sine principis permissu, feras prosternere debere.

Mulmutius, the king who first compiled the Mulmutian code, which was *afterwards translated into Latin by Gildas, and again into Saxon by Alfred.* Being dissatisfied with the share of his father's dominions allotted to him, he flies to Elfugius, king of Norway; gains him to his interests; brings away his daughter and a large army; meets at sea the king of the Daci, a former admirer of the young lady; fails in his attempt on Britain, which was wholly under the power of his brother Belinus; and, having lost both his dominions and his mistress, flies to Gaul, and thence to Seginus king of the Allobroges. Here, being *fair in his person, and competently skilled in hawking and hunting,* he gains the affections of the king and of his only daughter; marries her; succeeds to the crown; forms a league with the princes of Gaul; invades Britain, and is on the point of attacking his brother, when their differences are settled by the intervention of their mother. The two princes, uniting their forces, march from victory to victory till they effect the conquest of Rome. Even the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar becomes, in this work, a tale of chivalry. Nennius, brother of Cassibelanus, has a single combat with the Roman general; is wounded; but ultimately wrests from him his sword, called *Crocea Mors* because the wounds

it inflicted were incurable; obtains a victory by its means, and expires. A second invasion attempted by Cæsar is unsuccessful; his ships being disabled by sharp stakes driven into the Thames: but the submission of Britain to Rome is at length effected by negotiation in the reign of Claudian, whose daughter Gennissa is married to Arviragus, king of the Britons.

The second book extends to the reign of Vortigern. Lucius, son of Coillus, wishing to embrace Christianity, obtains from Pope Eleutherius two holy doctors, Faganus and Dunianus, who baptize the king and convert the whole nation. The twenty-eight flamens, and three arch-flamens, by an easy substitution, are changed for as many bishops and archbishops; the latter being established at York, London, and Chester. Lucius dies in 156; after which the Britons, growing impatient of their subjection to Rome, refuse the usual tribute, and Severus is sent over to reduce them. He conquers the South, and builds a wall across the island to secure his conquest; but Fulgenius, general of the northern tribes, though repulsed at first, obtains new succours from *Scythia*, and gives him battle near York, where both leaders are slain. Basianus, Carassius, Asclepiodotus, and Coel, are successively elected by the Britons; the last submits to Con-

stantine the Roman general, and dies, leaving an only daughter, the celebrated Helena, whom Constantine marries, and becomes father to the emperor of the same name. Some years after this, Octavius, monarch of Britain, having also an only daughter, is advised by Caradoc, duke of Cornwall, to bestow her, together with the crown, on Maximianus, a Roman senator, whose ambition was well known. Caradoc sends to Rome his son Mauritius, "*a man of great probity and boldness, and ready to support his opinion against all contradiction by arms in single combat.*" Maximianus, readily entering into his views, lands in Britain with a small army levied in Gaul, and ultimately, by the assistance of Caradoc, obtains quiet possession of the lady and the crown, notwithstanding the opposition of a formidable competitor, Conan Meriadoc, nephew to the king. Being well established in the sovereignty, he draws to his standard the whole military force of the island; embarks with them for Armorica; subdues that country, the crown of which he bestows upon his former rival, Conan Meriadoc, and marches forward to wrest the empire from Gratian and Valerian. In the mean time the new king of Armorica, being dissatisfied with the native ladies of his dominions, writes to Dionotus, duke of Cornwall, requesting that he would

send him over his fair daughter Ursula for his own wife, and a competent share of virgins for his officers and army. Dionotus accepts the commission; collects 11,000 noble virgins, with Ursula at their head, and 60,000 plebeian maidens, and embarks them with proper precaution. But the fleet containing this valuable consignment of beauty and chastity is unfortunately dispersed by a storm. Many of the virgins are shipwrecked, and many more fall into the hands of *Guaninus*, king of the *Huns*, and Melga, king of the Picts, two piratical princes in the interest of Gratian. Nor is this all. The two kings sail for Albany; learn the defenceless state of Britain; march through the country, "*slaying the irrational vulgar*," by whom alone it was guarded; and, notwithstanding a few temporary succours sent from Rome, continue their ravages, till Guethelinus, bishop of London, obtains from Audroen, king of Armorica, the third in succession from Conan Meriadoc, an army under the command of his son Constantine, who is elected king of Britain, repels the invaders, and dies after a victorious reign, leaving three sons, Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uther Pendragon. What follows in this book nearly resembles the romance of Merlin, of which an abstract will be given hereafter.

The third book, which is occupied by the life of Vortigern, differs from the romance, partly by relating more circumstantially the famous interview between Vortigern and Rowena (here called Rouixe), at which "*Satan found an entrance into the king's heart,*" and partly by the insertion of an anecdote respecting Eldol, duke of Gloucester, who, at the treacherous entertainment given by Hengist, escaped the fate of the 460 nobles slaughtered there, by seizing a stake, with which he killed no less than seventy of the armed Saxons. It also mentions the arrival of St. German and Bishop Lupus, for the purpose of extirpating the Pelagian heresy; the deposition of Vortigern; and the victorious reign of his son Vortimer, who, after expelling the Saxons, was poisoned by Rowena; and the re-election of Vortigern.

The fourth book is a mere episode, being a translation of the prophecies of Merlin.

The fifth book contains the reign of Aurelius Ambrosius. This prince, accompanied by his brother Uther, arrives in Britain at the head of 10,000 chosen men, defeats Vortigern, pursues him from place to place, and ultimately burns him in his tower. He then turns his arms against the Saxons, who retire towards Scotland; but, being forced to risk a decisive battle, are completely defeated.

Eldol, duke of Gloucester, meeting Hengist during the engagement, a dreadful single combat ensues; and at length Eldol, seizing his adversary by the nasal* of his helmet, carries him off as a prisoner. On the following day he is beheaded; and his relations Octa and Cosa, having implored the mercy of Aurelius, are permitted to settle in a desert territory contiguous to Scotland. Aurelius, after repairing the ruined churches and monasteries in his dominions, and endowing new ones, is desirous to honour the British chiefs slaughtered by Hengist, by a suitable monument: he takes the advice of Merlin, who is sent to Ireland to bring over the great stones called the Giant's Dance, then erected on the hill of Kildare, but formerly brought from Africa, and endowed with various medical and magical properties†. Merlin, though strenuously opposed by Gillomanus king of Ireland, brings away

* The *nasal* of a helmet seems to have preceded the visor. It was an iron plate which descended over the nose, and thereby gave some protection to the face of the combatant.

† If, as Llwd and some other learned men have conjectured, a Gaelic colony preceded the Cymri in the possession of Britain, it is not impossible that Stonehenge, and other similar monuments, may have been erected by these early settlers, and that the foolish story in the text may have been grafted on some mutilated tradition of that event.

the stones, after defeating the Irish army, and erects them on Salisbury plain. After this, Pascentius, son of Vortigern, invades the northern parts of Britain; is defeated; flies to Gillomanus, king of Ireland, and returning with him makes a descent at St. David's in Wales, and prepares to attack Uther Pendragon, who, Aurelius being then confined by sickness, commanded the British army. A certain Saxon, by name Eopa, undertakes to poison the valiant Aurelius; assumes the dress of a *monk*, having shaved his head and beard for that purpose; takes with him a box of medicines; proceeds to Winchester, and is admitted to the king as a physician. Aurelius, having taken the deadly potion, covers himself with the bed-clothes, falls asleep, and expires. The death of this great man is marked by the appearance of a wonderful comet, from which issued two long and brilliant rays, together with a fiery form much resembling a dragon.

The sixth book contains the reign of Uther. This prince, who was then with the army, sees the comet with great surprise, and pointing it out to Merlin, who was with him, learns that it portends his brother's death, and foretels his own accession, the future glory of his son Arthur, and the birth of a daughter whose children should hereafter reign in

Britain. He then, at the earnest request of Merlin, attacks Gillomanus and Pascentius; obtains a complete victory; and, returning to Winchester, causes Aurelius to be buried with great pomp within the area of Stonehenge. His first act, after his election to the crown, is to cause two golden dragons to be made, in imitation of that which he had seen in the comet's tail; one of which he solemnly offers up in the church at Winchester, and takes the other as the royal standard; whence he was afterwards called Pen-dragon, or Dragon's-head. Meanwhile, Octa and Cosa rebel; invade the northern provinces; advance as far as York, and besiege it. Uther arrives with succours, but is repulsed, and driven as far as Mount *Daven*. At night he summons a council of war on the mountain. Gorlois, duke of Cornwall, advises a night attack; which succeeds, and Octa and Cosa are taken. After this victory Uther goes round "*all the Scotish nations, and reclaims that rebellious people from their ferocity.*" He then repairs to London, where he summons all his nobles to attend the festival of his solemn coronation. Gorlois arrives among the rest, with his wife Igerna, whose beauty attracted all eyes, and particularly those of the king. "*To her alone he incessantly directed the choicest dainties; and sent cups of gold*

by the hands of his most familiar messengers; he smiled on her frequently, and accosted her with words of pleasantry." But this pleasantry displeasing Gorlois, he left the banquet abruptly, and refused to return. Uther, glad of a cause of quarrel, vowed to lay waste the dominions of his rival, and soon accomplished his threats by burning many towns in Cornwall, and besieging Gorlois in his citadel of Divulioc, and Igerna in that of Tintagel. But this fortress, built on a precipice, surrounded on three sides by the sea, and inaccessible except by a narrow and exposed path, was impregnable by open force; and the impatient monarch, by the advice of his confident, Ulfin de Ricaradoc, is forced to solicit the aid of Merlin; who kindly transforms the king into the likeness of Gorlois, while Ulfin and himself personate two Cornish knights, Jordan and Bricel. The unsuspecting Igerna, thus betrayed, becomes the mother of Arthur; Gorlois is killed in a sally; and Uther, returning to Tintagel, marries the widow. At length, after a long reign, Uther falls a victim to Saxon treachery. Octa and Cosa, escaping from confinement, had fled to Germany; levied an army; and, making a descent in Albany, not only ravaged that country, but, having defeated the British forces commanded by Loth of Londonesia (Lothian), to

whom Uther had married his daughter Anne*, advanced from conquest to conquest till they arrived at St. Alban's, which was also surrendered to them. The old king, though confined to his bed by sickness, was so indignant at the news, that, having levied a vast army, he orders himself to be conveyed in a litter at their head, attacks the enemy, and, after two days' fighting, gains a victory, in which Octa and Cosa are slain. But the Saxons, during their possession of the town, had poisoned a celebrated spring, the waters of which being swallowed by Uther occasioned his immediate death. He was buried at Stone-henge near his brother Aurelius.

The seventh book, which is occupied by the reign of Arthur, being the most important of the whole work, it may be worth while to give a separate summary of its chapters.

1. Arthur, though only fifteen years of age, is elected as king at a general meeting of the nobles, and crowned by the prelate Dubricius with the consent of the whole clergy. He immediately takes

* The chronicles of Britany state that Uther had two daughters, one of which, Anne, was married to Budic king of Britany, and another, whose name is not mentioned, to Loth of Londonesia. This is also assumed by Geoffrey himself in other parts of his work.

the field against the Saxons, of whom a fresh army, under the command of Colgrinus, combined with numerous auxiliaries of Scots and Picts, had advanced from the north and gained possession of York. He attacks and defeats them on the banks of the river Duglas, near that city, which he then besieges, after sending a detachment under Cador duke of Cornwall, against Baldulph, brother of Colgrin, who was hastening, at the head of a second army, to the relief of the place. The Britons are again victorious; and Baldulph, anxious to communicate to his brother the approach of a fresh body of Germans under Cheldric, determines to gain admittance into the city in disguise. He shaves his hair and beard; assumes the dress and the harp of a minstrel; amuses the besiegers by playing various tunes on his lyre; gradually approaches the walls; and, making a private signal, is drawn up by a rope. During this time Cheldric arrives with six hundred ships; and Arthur, by the advice of his council, raises the siege; retires to London; and sends an embassy to Armorica, beseeching the assistance of Hoel, who shortly after arrives with his army at Southampton.

2. The two kings march to Lincoln, then besieged by the Saxons; kill six thousand of the

enemy; harass them in their retreat; and pursue them quite to the Caledonian forest, where they again attempt a short resistance: but Arthur blockades them in the wood; cuts off their provisions; and compels them to abandon all their booty, and to embark for Germany, after giving hostages that they will not attempt to return. But the Saxons, regardless of their treaty, proceed round the coasts of the island, and, suddenly making a descent at Totness, ravage the country. Arthur hastens to the southward by forced marches, and at length meets the enemy in Somersetshire. Both sides prepare for a decisive engagement. "Arthur himself, dressed in a breast-plate worthy of so great a king, places on his head a golden helmet engraved with the semblance of a dragon. Over his shoulders he throws his shield called *Priwen*, on which a picture of holy Mary, mother of God, constantly recalled her to his memory. Girt with *Caliburn*, a most excellent sword, and fabricated in the isle of Avalon, he graces his right hand with the lance named *Ron*. This was a long and broad spear, well contrived for slaughter." After a long and severe conflict, Arthur, calling on the name of the Virgin, rushes into the midst of the enemies, and destroys four hundred and seventy of them with

the formidable Caliburn. Colgrin, Baldulph, and some thousands of inferior rank, are killed; Cheldric retreats.

3. Arthur, in marching against the Saxons, had been forced to leave Hoel, who was sick, in the city of Aldud (probably Alcluyd, i. e. Dunbarton), of which the Picts and Scots immediately formed the siege. He therefore hastened back with all speed after his victory at Mount Badon, leaving Cador to pursue the fugitives. Cador occupies the Saxon ships, and, thus cutting off their retreat by sea, constantly harasses them till they are driven in great distress to the isle of Thanet, with the loss of their general, Cheldric; and then hastens back to join Arthur, who in the mean time had defeated the Picts and Scots in three several engagements, and had driven them into Mureith (Murray) and the islands of Loch Lomond. Of these, as the author tells us, there are sixty, each of which contains in it a single rock of great height, having on its summit an eagle's nest; and these eagles have an annual meeting, where, by their prophetic screams, they make known the great events which are to take place in the ensuing year. Arthur blockades the enemy by means of a fleet of boats; destroys many of them by famine; and reduces the rest to unconditional submission, after having totally dispersed a

large fleet from Ireland brought by Gillomanus to their assistance. Hoel now surveys the lake, which had sixty rivers running into it, and only one efflux; and this circumstance, added to its sixty islands, and rocks, and eagles' nests, and eagles' prophecies, appears to him very marvellous: but having further examined the province, he discovered a still greater wonder, viz. a pool exactly square, of twenty feet in length and breadth, having in its four angles four different sorts of fish, which never intermixed. Having reported these discoveries to Arthur, he further tells him that there is a lake in Wales near the Severn, called Linliguna, into which when the sea flows at high water, it is absorbed and forms a whirlpool; but during the ebb, the same waters are returned with violence, casting their spray to a great distance; and if this spray should fall on any number of persons having their faces turned towards the lake, they would be instantly drawn into it; but if their backs be turned towards it, the aspersion is not mischievous. Arthur now goes to spend his Christmas at York, where he is occupied in the restoration of churches, in distributing justice, and in rewarding his adherents. To Loth, who had married his sister Anne, he gives the sovereignty of Lothian; he appoints Auguselus, brother of Loth, king of the Scots; and

bestows on the third brother, Urien, the province of Murray. On this occasion, also, Arthur married Guenhara, a lady of Roman extraction, educated at the court of Cador, duke of Cornwall. Next summer he sails to Ireland; defeats Gillomanus; subdues the country; passes on to Iceland, which he also conquers; and receives the submission of Doldonius king of Gelandia, and Gimnasius king of the Orcades. He then returns to Britain, and spends twelve years in peace.

"During this interval Arthur increases his establishment, by inviting from distant parts, and fixing in his family, all who were particularly distinguished by their valour; and such was the courtesy practised in his household, that it excited the emulation of all Europe. Hence the noblest foreigners were dissatisfied with themselves, till they had acquired the art of putting on their armour, and of going through the martial exercise adopted by Arthur's knights*." Thus supported, he entertains projects of more extensive ambition. He equips a fleet; invades Norway; subdues the country, and bestows it on Loth, who had some pretensions to the crown. In this campaign the celebrated Ga-

* Unde nobilissimus quisque incitatus, vilipendebat se, nisi sese, sive in induendo, sive in arma ferendo, ad modum militum Arthuri haberet. Fo. 74. A.

wain, son of Loth, being only twelve years old, was invested with arms by his uncle Arthur. The king then proceeds to attack Flollo, at that time lieutenant of Gaul, under the emperor Leo; and Flollo, after a severe defeat, being forced to retire to Paris, proposes to him the decision of the war by a single combat. Arthur accepts the challenge; they repair, after exchanging hostages, to "an island without the city," and a desperate conflict ensues, in which Arthur is much wounded, but ultimately cleaves his adversary's skull with a blow of Caliburn*. After this victory he sends Hoel, with one half of his army, to subdue Aquitaine; which being accomplished, and the other provinces reduced by Arthur, he spends nine years in Gaul; settles the affairs of the kingdom; holds a plenar court at Paris; bestows on Bedwer, his butler, the province of Neustria; on Caius, his sewer, that of Anjou; and at length returns to England.

4. In this chapter are described the ceremonies of Arthur's coronation at Winchester; at which were present a long list of tributary kings, and

* In the Annales de Bretaigne of Maitre Alain Bouchard (Paris 1531), we find that the Virgin kindly threw her own ermine mantle over Arthur's shield, and thereby confounded the intellect of Flollo. Bouchard quotes, as his authority for this miracle, the "Memoriale Historiarum."

among the rest, "the twelve peers or petty kings of Gaul, under the conduct of Guerin of Chartrain."

5. An embassy arrives from Rome to demand the renewal of the tribute formerly paid by Britain. Arthur resists the demand; levies an army of 183,200 cavalry, and an almost innumerable infantry, which are ordered to assemble at the port of Barfleur for the purpose of invading the empire. On the other hand, Lucius Tiberius collects his forces, consisting of Italians, Greeks, Africans, and Asiatics, under their respective kings, whose names are enumerated. Arthur embarks at Southampton, leaving the government of Britain to his queen Gahumara and his nephew Modred; and, while at sea, dreams a dream about a battle between a dragon and a bear. Being arrived at the place of rendezvous, he hears that a wicked giant had carried off the niece of Hoel, and retreated with her to a rock called St. Michael's. Arthur sets off, with Bedwer and Kay, to explore the giant's retreat. They perceive two fires on opposite points of the rock; and being ignorant which is the abode of the monster, Bedwer takes a boat; approaches the smaller fire; ascends the hill; and is disturbed by the screams of a woman. Having drawn his sword, and reached the place, he sees an aged and

venerable female weeping over a fresh grave. She was the young lady's nurse and governess: her fair pupil had died of fright at the first embrace of the giant, who, thus disappointed of his prey, had without loss of time ravished the old woman. Bedwer assures her that she shall be preserved from a second violation, and returns to Arthur. They leave their horses to their squires, mount the other height, and find the giant sitting over a fire to roast the remains of some hogs which he had partly eaten raw, so that his mouth was still besmeared with blood. At the sight of Arthur he snatches up his club, and Arthur draws his sword. After a long battle, of which Kay and Bedwer are spectators, the giant is killed; and Arthur declares that he had never met with such a formidable opponent since his encounter with "the *giant Rithon*" * on Mount Aramanus. This Rithon, it seems, had made himself a furred cloak with the beards of kings, and had sent an embassy to demand that of Arthur, promising that he would assign to it the place of honour in his cloak, as a testimony of his valour;

* This was Rhita-Gawr, a celebrated tyrannicide, who lived *before the historical æra of the Britons*, but whose memory is preserved in the Bardic triads, &c.—In the *dramatic tales* he is said to have fought for the beard of Arthur; but he was then vanquished. Owen's Camb. Biography.

but Arthur, of course, had vanquished the impertinent giant, and carried off the garment. He now orders Bedwer to cut off the head, and they return to the camp, which is filled with admiration at the exploit of their general. Hoel causes a church to be built over the body of his niece, and the mountain where she was buried is still called "Helen's Tomb."

6. Arthur lands with his army in France, follows the course of the river Aube, and finds the enemy near Autun. The author relates many skirmishes, in which the Britons are generally successful, and which terminate in a decisive battle, where Arthur, Hoel, and Gawain, after performing prodigies of valour, obtain a difficult and bloody victory. Bedwer, Kay, with many officers of distinction, are killed; and the body of the first is sent to Bayeux, and the second to Cadonium (Cadouin?), for interment. Arthur then proceeds; subdues Dauphiny and Savoy; and is preparing to march to Rome, when his further progress is prevented by learning the treason of Modred, who had seized his queen and crown during his absence.

7. The traitor Modred had agreed with Cheldric, king of the Saxons, to abandon to them all the eastern coast of Britain north of the Humber, together with Kent, as held by Hengist and Horsa, on

condition of being permitted to occupy the remaining dominions of his uncle. He had also united himself with the Picts and Scots; and, having thus a vast army at his command, marched to oppose Arthur, and gave him battle, immediately on his landing at Sandwich. Arthur, however, is victorious, though with the loss of Auguselus king of Scotland (who was succeeded by Ywain, son of Urien, his nephew), and of the celebrated Gawain. Modred retreats towards Winchester. The queen, who was then at York, flies to Chester, and takes the veil in the conventual church of St. Julius the Martyr. A second battle takes place near Winchester; and Modred, being again defeated, retires into Cornwall, and pitches his camp in a very strong position on the banks of the river Camblan. Arthur resolves to force his camp, and a desperate battle takes place, which is fatal to nearly all the chiefs on both sides. Modred is slain; and Arthur himself, being mortally wounded, is carried off to the isle of Avalon, leaving the crown to his relation Constantine, son of Cador, duke of Cornwall, in the year of our Lord 542.

The eighth book relates the uninteresting reigns of Constantine, Conan, Vortiporius, Malgo, and Caterieus. The last of these princes, attacked on one side by the Saxons, and on the other by God-

mundus, an *African* king, who had previously conquered Ireland, is at length forced to abandon all the eastern and middle provinces of Britain, and to retreat into the mountains of Cornwall, Wales, and Cumberland. Even the arrival of St. Austin is by no means favourable to the wretched Britons; for the apostle of the Saxons, having an unfortunate difference with the monks of Bangor, lost no opportunity of exasperating his converts against the British clergy.

The ninth book, which concludes the Chronicle, is chiefly occupied by a romantic and rather amusing account of a period which in the Saxon annals is particularly disgusting, from the savage conduct of Penda, king of Mercia. Cadvan, elected nominal sovereign of Britain for the purpose of making head against Ethelbert king of Kent, prepares for hostilities; but first tries the effect of negotiation, by means of which the rival monarchs suddenly become intimate friends. Their mutual affection is so great, that the queen of Ethelbert, being divorced by her husband, repairs to Cadvan, as the most powerful intercessor whom she could find. Though his zeal for her service proves ineffectual, she continues at his court, and is there delivered of a son, who is christened Edwin, about the same time that Cadvan becomes the father of another, the celebrated Cadwallo. These children are nursed toge-

ther at the court of Cadvan; are sent together to Armorica to be fostered under King Salomon; return together to Britain; and become, about the same time, the sovereigns of their respective nations. After two years, Edwin proposed to his friend that both should be solemnly crowned at the same place, which was on the frontiers of Northumberland, but within the British line. Cadwallo consents, and they meet on the banks of the river Duglas; but while the solemnities are preparing, the Welsh prince happens to fall asleep, with his head on the lap of his nephew Brianus, and is unexpectedly awakened by a shower of tears which fall from the eyes of his supporter. Cadwallo, much surprised, inquires the cause of his grief, which Brianus (whom the Welsh call Braint-Hyr) attributes to fear of Saxon perfidy; and the young king, suddenly adopting this suspicion, puts an end to the ceremony. Edwin very naturally resents this abrupt resolution, and the two friends become implacable enemies. Cadwallo, after the loss of a decisive battle, flies to Ireland, from whence he makes many efforts to return and dispute the possession of Britain with his rival; but is always disappointed by means of a Spanish astrologer at Edwin's court, who discovers every intended attempt, and reveals it to his rival. The fugitive now resolves to take refuge

in Armorica: but in sailing thither his fleet is dispersed by a storm, and he is shipwrecked on the desolate island of Garnareia (Guernsey?), where he falls sick, and refuses to taste food,—but at length entertains a longing desire for venison. Brianus takes his bow and arrows, but, finding no wild animals on the island, cuts a piece of flesh from his own thigh, dresses it, and gives it to his uncle, who, not knowing the fraud, is marvellously pleased with the taste, and recovers his health. They now arrive in Armorica, and request the assistance of Salomon; but, as it is necessary in the first instance to get rid of the Spanish conjurer, Brianus undertakes this commission. He embarks for Britain disguised as a beggar; finds the court of Edwin at York; discovers his own sister employed in the servile office of fetching water for the queen, in a rich vessel which he recognises as one of the spoils of a British city; learns from her that Pellitus is at that moment distributing alms to a number of mendicants; mixes with the crowd; stabs Pellitus; and escapes undiscovered. He then proceeds alone to Exeter; gets possession of that city; proclaims the speedy return of Cadwallo; and maintains his post against a large army of Mercians commanded by Pæanda (Penda). At this moment Cadwallo arrives with an army from Armorica; hastens to

Exeter; relieves the town; forces the Mercian king to swear allegiance to him; and marches against Edwin, who is slain in the decisive battle of Hatfield.—The rest of the story, and the reign of Cadwallader, are not worth abridging.

Such is the substance of this strange Chronicle, from which it certainly is not easy to extract much useful and authentic history*; but to which we owe the fable of Shakspere's Lear, that of Sackville's Ferrex and Porrex, the most beautiful episodes in Drayton's Polyolbion, and a great variety of allusions in the poems of Milton and others, as well as the first outline of our earliest and best romances.

* Giraldus Cambrensis adduces a very comical proof of Geoffrey's want of veracity. "There was, it seems, in the neighbourhood of Chester, a man of the name of Melerius, who, in consequence of having had an intrigue with a young lady on the eve of Palm-Sunday, was, ever after, more or less tormented by devils. Though perfectly illiterate, he could distinguish the true from the false passages in books; because the former drove away, while the latter attracted round him, crowds of evil spirits. When Geoffrey's Chronicle was put into his lap, "non solum corpori ipsius toti, sed etiam libro superposito, longe solito crebrius et tædiosius insederunt." It. Cam. lib. 1. c. 5.

SECTION IV.

Summary of Geoffrey's "Vita Merlini."— Inquiry into the Materials from which it is likely that his Chronicle was originally composed.— Conjecture respecting the fabulous Arthur.

The Life of the Caledonian Merlin consists of 1528 lines; yet it gives no account of the birth or parentage of the prophet, who is introduced at the eve of an important battle, fought between Gwendolau, who governed the kingdom of Scotland, and Peredur, a prince of the Strathcluyd Britons, aided by Roderick, king of Cumberland. Merlin, whose twin-sister Ganieda (Gwenddydd) was married to Roderick, and who is himself qualified as a prince of Demetia (Dyffyd, perhaps here the Teviot), takes part with Peredur, and brings with him his three brothers; all of whom are unfortunately slain in the action. Merlin causes them to be honourably interred in the neighbouring cemetery of *Varia Capella* (Falkirk); passes three nights and three days in lamentation over their graves; refuses all food; becomes frantic, from grief and abstinence;

and, rushing into the Caledonian Forest, renounces all human society. A minstrel, whom his sister had dispatched in search of him, accidentally learns the usual place of his abode, where he strikes his harp, and sings a strain describing the sorrows of Gwendolen (the wife of Merlin) and of Gwenddydd his sister, comparing them to the Sidonian Dido, to Phyllis bewailing the loss of Demophoön, and to Briseïs lamenting her separation from Achilles. This classical lay produces its effect. Merlin encourages him to proceed; is gratified by his compliance; recovers from his madness; and requests to be conducted to the court of Rhydderch, where he is received with the utmost joy: but the crowd of a court annoys and importunes him to such a degree that he again becomes frantic. Rhydderch in vain attempts to purchase his stay by the offers of the richest presents, "of robes, hawks, hounds, gold, jewels, and *plate embossed by Wieland**." Merlin is indifferent to all these things; even music loses its effect; and his friends, unable to detain him otherwise, have recourse to coercion. He now

* *Afferrique jubet vestes, volucresque, canesque,*
Quadrupedesque citos, aurum, gemmasque micantes,
Pocula quæ sculpsit Guielandus in urbe Sigeni.

The Wieland here mentioned is noticed in Mr. Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scotish Border."

becomes silent and melancholy, and the court of Rhydderch is, in consequence, rather duller than usual: but at length a whimsical incident procures the liberty of the prophet, and produces some amusement among the courtiers.

The queen, passing one day through the hall, is kindly accosted by the king, who embraces her, makes her sit by him, and, observing a leaf entangled in her hair, takes it off with an air of dalliance, and throws it on the ground. Merlin, who had surveyed this scene in silence, suddenly bursts into a loud fit of laughter, but refuses to communicate the cause of his mirth, unless he should previously receive the most solemn promise of being set at liberty. The king having sworn to comply, he declares that the queen was just then returned from a meeting with her lover in *an arbour strewed with leaves* *, one of which had accidentally adhered to

* An adventure nearly similar is attributed to Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's queen. "Melwas, a mythological character, arrayed himself in *leaves*, to lie in wait for Gwenhwyfar and her attendants, who, according to custom, were out on May morning to gather birch for garlands to welcome the summer; and by means of that disguise he carried her away." Owen's Camb. Biography. This rape is also recorded in the Life of St. Gildas, where Melwas is called a king of Somersetshire. Bibl. Reg. MSS. 13. B. vii.

the back of her head; and that the kind complaisance with which his majesty had removed this unsuspected evidence of her frailty, had appeared to him extremely comical. Rhydderch, far from joining in the laugh, turns from the queen in disgust, and bitterly laments her infidelity; but the artful Gwenddydd, not at all disconcerted, immediately contrives a stratagem to disprove the prophetic skill of the madman. Leading in her hand one of her youngest pages, she approaches Merlin, and asks him by what death that boy will die. The prophet replies, that he will perish by falling from a rock. She then orders the boy to retire; to change his dress; to cut off his hair; and to return after being completely disguised. He is again led up to Merlin, who pronounces that this boy will find his death on the branches of a tree. The queen now triumphs, and laughs at her husband's credulity; but, pursuing the test, she directs the boy to depart again, and to return in the dress of a female; when, the same question being repeated, Merlin answers that this person will be drowned in a river. These apparently discordant prophecies having fully convinced Rhydderch of his wife's chastity, she is so far from bearing malice against her brother, that she joins her solicitations to those of Gwendolen and of the king to procure his further stay at court.

But Merlin being inflexible, she at length desists from her importunity, and only begs to know whether, since he is so enamoured of the Caledonian Forest, with its nuts and its apple-trees, it be his wish that the fair Gwendolen should accompany him, or lead the life of a widow, or take a new husband.

He replies, that his wife is perfectly at liberty to make another choice, and that, in this case, he will not fail to make her a liberal marriage-present; but warns her at the same time that Gwendolen must carefully keep his rival from his sight, because their meeting would inevitably prove fatal to the object of her second choice.

Merlin now departs, leaving the court not a little astonished at his strange prophecy respecting the page; which was, however, after a few years, exactly accomplished. For, being on a hunting-party, his horse threw him over a precipice into a river; but in such a manner that his foot accidentally hung in the branch of a tree, his head being under water.

Merlin, in the mean time, remains in the forest with no other society than that of the wild beasts, whom, like another Orpheus, he attracts round him; and happening one evening to survey the sky, observes that the planet Venus has a forked appear-

ance, which, it seems, denotes the separation of love, and therefore proves to him that his wife Gwendolen is preparing to take another husband. After resolving to bear this slight misfortune with philosophy, he prepares to collect the promised portion; draws together a herd of stags, fallow deer, and goats; and, riding on a stag, drives his animals to the dwelling of Gwendolen, whom he invites to accept his marriage-present. The husband, who from a window beholds what is passing, is so much amused by the uncouth appearance of his predecessor, that he bursts into a loud fit of laughter; at which Merlin being displeased, tears off one of the horns of the stag on which he rode; throws it at the impertinent scoffer; kills him on the spot, and rides off into the forest.

Being closely pursued by the company who had assembled for the bridal ceremony, he attempts to cross a river; falls from his stag; swims back to shore, is secured, and carried as a captive to the court of Rhydderch; where Gwenddydd and her uxorious consort in vain attempt to procure for him such amusements as may compensate for those of his favourite forest. While confined to the court he refuses all food, and abandons himself to melancholy: Rhydderch, therefore, orders that he should be led out into the city, and is informed on his re-

turn that the prophet had been twice observed to laugh during his circuit; once on passing by the porter of the palace, who asked for alms; and a second time in the market-place, on seeing a young man who was purchasing a pair of new shoes. The good king, as we have seen, always felt an irresistible impulse to learn the cause of Merlin's laughter; and on this occasion again consented to pay the highest price for the gratification of his curiosity, by dismissing the prophet into the forest. Merlin now told him that his begging porter had concealed in the earth beneath his feet a treasure of considerable value; and that the young man who had bargained so earnestly for a pair of new shoes, would not live to wear them, but immediately on quitting the city would fall into a river and be drowned. Both these assertions being verified, he was left at liberty to depart: but Gwenddydd having represented to him the danger of encountering the frosts of winter within the forest, he consents that she shall cause a house to be built for him; at the same time requesting that he may have a separate edifice for the purpose of an observatory, with sixty windows, sixty doors, and as many secretaries to write down his observations. This being settled, he used to pass his summers in wandering through the forest, and his winters at the

new habitation, where he frequently received the visits of his sister.

At these meetings Merlin uttered a variety of prophecies, which, in the poem, extend through more than 100 lines*; at the conclusion of which he exhorts Gwenddydd to return home for the purpose of attending the king, who is dying; and requests that she will send to him Taliéssin, who was just arrived from Armorica, where he had been receiving the instructions of the learned Gildas.

Rhydderch was already dead; and his widow, after many lamentations, determines to pass the remainder of her life in acts of piety. In the mean time Taliessin had joined Merlin, and a very long and learned conversation takes place between the two bards.

Taliessin begins by a lecture on meteorology and on cosmography. He says, that within the firmament, which incloses all things as the shell incloses the nut, God has placed the heaven of æther, the

* It is remarkable that Merlin the Wild is, in this passage, confounded by his biographer with Merlin Ambrose; for he is made to say

Hæc Vortigerno cecini prolixius olim,
Exponendo duum sibi mystica bella draconum,
In ripâ stagni quando consedimus hausti.

abode of the angels, which is rendered glorious by the sun; that below this is the heaven of air, ornamented by the moon, and inhabited by an inferior order of angels, who carry upwards the prayers of mankind; and that below the moon our impurer atmosphere is inhabited by caco-dæmons, our constant and most dangerous enemies. He then passes to the sea, of which he says, one part flows round hell, and is of course intensely hot: another part, adjoining to the poles, is intolerably cold; but it has a most valuable sand, produced by the influence of the planet Venus on the vapour of its waters. The Arabians attribute to this sea the generation of diamonds and gems, which are so salubrious to the wearer by their medical virtues, and which denote their several species of efficacy by the gradations of colour. The third, or temperate sea, produces fishes of all sorts, and salts, and affords nourishment to birds, which, as well as fishes, originally sprung from it. Taliessin enumerates many of the most curious marine animals, and then passes to the earth, of which he describes the islands in the following order; Britain, Thanatos (Thanet?), the Orcades, Ytilia (Thule?), Ireland, the Isle of Gades, that of Gorgades, Argire, Crysse, Taprobana; and, lastly, the "Fortunate Island, or Islan. of Apples." This, which is the

paragon of fertility, is governed by nine sisters, of whom the eldest, called *Morgen*, is eminently skilled in medicine, mathematics, and magic. "To this island," continues Taliessin, "we transported, after the fatal battle of Camblan, the wounded Arthur, our pilot being Barinthus, to whom the seas and the stars of heaven are well known. Morgen received us most honourably; placed the king on a bed of gold in her own chamber; uncovered his wounds with her noble hands; examined them long; and at last pronounced that he might yet recover, if left for a considerable time to the effect of her medical treatment. We therefore gladly committed him to her care, and returned home, having a most prosperous passage."

The mention of this incident leads to a political conversation, in the course of which Merlin gives, in about 150 lines, a very neat abridgment of Geoffrey's British Chronicle, from the reign of Constans to that of Conan.

At the close of this dialogue they are informed that a wonderful fountain has just made its appearance in the neighbourhood. The two bards proceed together to the spot; and Merlin, feeling thirsty and heated after his long speech, throws himself on the grass, takes a plentiful draught, and washes his temples with the water. At the instant

his senses are completely restored to him; he pours out an address of thanks to heaven; and then, unable to explain the phænomenon, asks the opinion of his friend. Taliessin, recollecting the extraordinary properties ascribed to different fountains, some of which are said to cure sore eyes, while others give or take away memory, or communicate an oily appearance to the skin, or change the colour of the sheep who drink them, seems to think it very natural that a draught of water should afford a cure for madness. He then accounts for the unexpected appearance of the fountain, by observing that it might have hitherto flowed under ground; and that, its course being impeded by some accident, it had been compelled to rise to the surface.

The news of Merlin's recovery being spread through the country, his former subjects come to request that he will resume the reins of government; but he excuses himself on account of his age and infirmities, pointing out a large oak, of which he had witnessed the growth from an acorn, and declaring his intention of passing the remainder of his days in abstinence and prayer. At this moment a flock of cranes, flying at a great height over their heads, first in a long file, and then breaking into circles so as to form the semblance of certain letters, attracts the attention of the multitude. Mer-

lin is requested to teach them the natural history of the crane; and to this he adds, in pure generosity, a general system of ornithology. Towards the close of his lecture he is interrupted by a madman, who howls most lamentably, and foams at the mouth like a boar. Merlin's attendants instantly seize him, with the view of amusing themselves with his absurd gestures and behaviour: but the prophet, having attentively surveyed him, recognises his person, and declares him to be a man of royal birth, and one of his earliest and most favourite companions, whose madness had originated in an accident, which he then proceeds to relate.

Being on a hunting party in the woods of *Argustli*, they had met with a clear spring shaded by a reverend oak, and, after satisfying their thirst, had discovered on the grass a number of delicious apples, which they immediately offered to Merlin; who, dividing them amongst the company, had accidentally neglected to reserve a part for himself. All ate with avidity, and at the instant, losing their senses, began to foam at the mouth, to tear each other with their teeth, and, finally, like so many wolves, ran howling into the woods. The poison, it seems, had been prepared for Merlin himself by a jealous female, whom, after a long cohabitation, he had ultimately abandoned. He now recom-

mends for his friend the trial of the same fountain which had restored his own senses, and the water is found to possess all its former efficacy.

Maeldin (for so he was called), Taliessin, Merlin, and Gwenddydd who had lately rejoined them, now determine to live together, and to dedicate their lives to God: Gwenddydd becomes, in her turn, inspired with the gift of prophecy; and a specimen of her new talent, not at all inferior in obscurity to the oracular jargon of her brother, concludes the poem.

The reader is now in possession of such materials as will enable him to estimate the degree of credit due to an opinion first promulgated by Polydore Virgil, and, though ably combated at the time by Leland and Price, again taken up by some modern authors*; viz. that "Geoffrey *invented* a very

* Even Mr. Turner, the able and successful champion of Welsh literature, has adopted this opinion. "I believe," says he, "the book of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who lived in the twelfth century, *to be his own composition*, and to abound with fable." Vindication of the Antient British Poems, &c. p. 145.—It is not easy to reconcile the foregoing passage with the following: "I believe Geoffrey to state the fact, when he says he found the history of Arthur in a book brought from that country (Bretagne). Perhaps, if any of the lays or legends concerning the Daniel Dremrudd, or red visage, the Alexander of Bretagne, could be found, we might meet the prototype of Arthur." Ibid. p. 159.

considerable part of the Chronicle, which he professed to translate from a British original."

The principal arguments alleged in support of this opinion might, perhaps, with equal efficacy, be directed against it; since they all lead to the inference, that, because many of the fables, which in the Chronicle usurp the place of true history, are outrageously absurd and improbable, they were therefore interpolations of the translator. Now it is evident that Geoffrey was a man of considerable learning and ingenuity. In the composition, of which we have just seen the abstract, are numberless allusions to, and not a few translations from, the poems of Merlin and Taliessin, which prove him to have been familiarly conversant with Welsh antiquities; while his language and versification, though by no means faultless; his allusions to the works of Ovid, and his frequent imitations of Pliny*, bear witness to his acquirements in Roman

* Much of Geoffrey's natural history, and certainly his whole system of ichthyology, is borrowed from this author. I will quote only one instance in the description of the Torpedo:

Ast alias clades Torpedo ferтur habere;
Nam, qui tangit eam viventem, protinus illi
Brachia cum pedibus torpent, et cætera membra,
Officioque suo, quasi mortua destituuntur.

Pliny's words are: Etiam procul, et e longinquo, vel si

literature. There is considerable happiness and taste in the general contrivance and arrangement of the poem, which, though essentially didactic, and intended to convey nearly all that the author can be supposed to have known of science and of history, is enlivened by a mixture of amusing anecdote, and rendered dramatic by the combination of incident and dialogue. If, therefore, the author of such a work had been disposed to invent a British Chronicle, it seems natural to suppose that he would have taken some pains to give an air of probability to his deception; he would not have suppressed the well-known exploits of Theodosius*, for the purpose of ascribing them to an imaginary Arthur; he would not have called up, as the antagonists of this Arthur, the supposititious names of a Frollo and a Lucius Hyberus; he would not have sent his fantastic hero to menace Italy at a time when that

hastâ virgâve attingatur, quamvis prævalidos lacertos torpescere, quamlibet ad cursum veloces alligari pedes. Hist. Nat. lib. 32. cap. 2.

* In 368 or 369 Claudian says,

——— maduerunt *Saxone* fuso
Orcades; incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule;
Scotorum tumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.
De iv. cons. Honorii v. 31 et seq.

country was filled by the authentic and splendid fame of Belisarius.

But Geoffrey has no where shown the slightest solicitude to establish the credibility of the events he relates. He only insists that he has translated into Latin the text of a native historian; that the MS. which he follows is antient*; that it is British; that it was put into his hands by Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, who had brought it from Armorica; and that, no former copy having been known in this country, neither William of Malmesbury, nor Henry of Huntingdon, nor Caradoc of Llancarvan, can, from their want of antient British documents, be qualified to write our early history. Indeed, so scrupulously does he adhere to this simple assertion, that, when he is about to relate the struggle for empire between Arthur and Modred, he thinks it necessary to state that he has supplied, from the testimony of Walter, some deficiencies in his original†. It is certainly possible

* Obtulit Galterus, &c. quendam Britannici sermonis librum *vetustissimum*. Procemium, edit. 1517.

† De hoc quidem consule Augusto Gaufridus Monumetensis tacebit. Sed ut in Britannico præfato sermone *invenit*, et a Galtero Oxenofordensi, in multis historiis peritissimo viro *audivit*, vili licet stylo, breviter tamen propalabit, Lib. vii. cap. 7.

that all these declarations may be false; and that Geoffrey, or Walter, or both, may have been impostors and liars: but, before this opinion is assumed, it ought to be shown that their assertion is improbable; and that a series of fables, intended to give an exaggerated opinion of British greatness, is more likely to have been forged in the twelfth century, than during the ignorance and credulity of some antecedent period.

The advocates of this opinion having confined their arguments to the three stories of Brutus, Merlin, and Arthur, as being the most important if not the most absurd fictions in the Chronicle, a very few words will be sufficient for an examination of the controversy.

Nennius, as we have already seen, is supposed to have written about the middle of the ninth century; and he has given, in chap. 1 and 4 of his History, an outline of the fable of Brutus, very nearly in conformity to the more circumstantial account related by Geoffrey. He afterwards, in chap. 12, reverts to the same subject, and traces the genealogy of Brutus up to Adam; which seems to show that the tradition was, in his time, very popular, and that his sketch was made out from two or more different authorities. In chap. 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44, he

gives a very circumstantial account of Merlin, differing very little from that of Geoffrey, with which it has been amalgamated by the romance writers. If, therefore, the text of Nennius were genuine and authentic, the invention of these tales must be more antient, by about three centuries, than the time of Geoffrey; and even supposing the passages in question to have been interpolated at some subsequent period, there is not the slightest authority for supposing them posterior to the publication of the Chronicle.

With respect to Arthur, the passage already quoted from William of Malmesbury*, and a variety of other testimonies, confirm the assertion made by Geoffrey in his prologue, that the exploits of this prince were "engraved in the memories of many nations, and the frequent subject of recita-

* The original text is very curious. After supposing that many of the victories of Ambrosius were gained "eximiâ bellicosi Arthuri operâ," he adds, "Hic est Arthurus de quo *Britonum nugæ hodieque delirant*; dignus plane quem non mendaces *somniarent* fabulæ, sed veraces prædicarent historiæ; quippe qui labantem patriam diu sustinuerit; infractasque civium mentes ad bellum acuerit; postremo, in obsidione Badonici montis, fretus imagine Dominicæ matris quam armis suis insuerat, nongentos hostium solus adorsus, incredibili cæde profligavit. Script. post Bed. page 9.

tion*." Gaimar, the author of a French metrical history of our Anglo-Saxon kings, alludes to a previous work (now lost) on the British story, in which he professes to have *amended*, by means of other MSS. which he names, the Chronicle of Geoffrey; from whom, however, he admits that he had borrowed a great part of his materials†. Wace, whose translation of the work has been preserved, expressly attributes the fabulous appearance of Arthur's history to its extreme popularity, and to the numerous interpolations introduced into it by various reciters‡. It seems therefore very strange to tax Geoffrey with having invented a story which he and all his contemporaries represent as confessedly

* "A multis populis, quasi inscripta mentibus, et jucunde et memoriter prædicarentur."

† La Rue's Dissertation. Archæol. vol. xii. p. 310 and 311.

‡ En cette grant paix que je di
Furent les merveilles trouvées
Qui d'Artus sont tant racomptées.
Ne tout mensonge, ne tout voir;
Ne tout faulte, ne tout savoir;
Tant ont *li compteour* compté,
Et *li fableour* tant fablé,
Pour les comptes embeleter,
Que tout ont fait fable sembler.

Wace ap. La Ravaillere, vol. i. p. 148.

antient, and which had been already disfigured by frequent recital.

But Geoffrey has further asserted that the British MS. which he translated was brought by Walter from Armorica; a circumstance surely not at all improbable, unless it could be shown that the Britons of France, though of common origin with the natives of this country, and speaking a dialect of the same language, had no knowledge of our traditional history. Now we know that at a much later period, and even down to the time of Chaucer, the *lays* of Bretagne, a species of tales nearly resembling the Welsh *Mabinogion**, continued to be extremely popular among the Normans resident here; and that a collection of them, in some of which Arthur's story is noticed, were translated by Marie†, a French poetess who lived at the court of our Henry III. We have also, in confirmation of Geoffrey's assertion, a contemporary authority which is cited by Mr. Turner. "That Arthur's fame," says he, "had acquired a gigantic shape in the twelfth century, is undoubted. Alanus de In-

* A sort of nursery-tales, containing many curious particulars respecting the Welsh mythology. A translation of them is preparing by Mr. Owen.

† See Appendix, No. II.

sulis was born 1109; and he informs us, that *if any was heard in Bretagne to deny that Arthur was then alive, he would be stoned.* He says, Who does not speak of him? He is even more known in Asia than in Britain, as our pilgrims returning from the East assure us. Both East and West talk of him. Egypt and the Bosphorus are not silent. Rome, the mistress of cities, sings his actions. Antioch, Armenia, Palestine, celebrate his deeds*." We may add to these testimonies, that the internal evidence of Geoffrey's history bespeaks its Armorican origin; because it differs in many respects from the Welsh traditions†, which probably would not have happened had it been invented by a Welshman; because the early victories of Arthur are principally attributed to Hoel‡, an Armorican

* Vindication of the Ant. Brit. Poets, p. 160.

† Ibid. See also Turner's Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 234 et seq.

‡ Geoffrey has rather veiled this circumstance in his Chronicle, but speaks more plainly in his poem:

Et puer Arturus fuerat; nec, debilitate
Ætatis, poterat tantas compescere turmas—
Mox igitur collegit Hoel ad bella feroces
Circumquaque viros; et multis millibus ad nos
Venit; et Arturo sociatus, perculit hostes
Sæpius aggrediens, et stragem fecit acerbam.
Hoc socio securus erat, fortisque per omnes
Arturus turmas, &c.

hero; and because the frequent and affected eulogies on the inhabitants of Poictou, a province highly interesting to the French Britons, whose territory it joins, but perfectly indifferent to the people of this country, have no apparent object, and could have answered no purpose in the mouth of our native historians*.

Upon the whole, there seems to be no good reason for supposing that this strange Chronicle was a sudden fabrication, or the work of any one man's invention. It rather resembles a superstructure gradually and progressively raised on the foundation of the history attributed to Nennius. That work is no more than a dry epitome, in which the author is more solicitous to quote his authorities, than to draw up an interesting or even intelligible narrative; and accordingly its various copies contain many interpolations, apparently intended for the purpose of elucidating the writer's meaning, and perhaps transcribed from the very sources to which he refers. Such a work, when translated into British, could not fail of inviting further inter-

* M. de la Ravaillere concludes, from these passages, which he cannot otherwise explain, that Wace (whom he calls Eustace, and to whom he attributes their insertion) was certainly a Poictevin. Revolut. de la Langue Françoise, p. 146.

polation; and as Nennius had expressly admitted the lives of saints, and even antient traditions, as unexceptionable sources of history, the fullest scope was allowed for additions to his imperfect sketch. Tradition could not easily furnish fables much more absurd than those of Brutus and Merlin; and if the life of St. Germain was sufficient authority for the supernatural feats of Arthur in the battle of Badon mount, there could be no reason for disbelieving his foreign conquests, which certainly were achievable by human means, if they were found in the legends of St. David or St. Dubritius.

That the lives of these saints do in fact contain an account of Arthur nearly similar to that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, we learn from Sir John Price, the contemporary and friend of Leland, with whom he was associated by Henry VIII. in the commission for examining the monastic libraries, and who consequently possessed the best opportunities for becoming acquainted with antient British manuscripts. He says that he had seen many MSS. of both these lives, in British as well as in Latin*; and informs us in another place, that "in the book of the life of St. Dubritius particular

* Habemus quidem illius divi (i. e. St. David), necnon et Sancti Dubritii—vitas, tum Latinâ tum vulgari linguâ conscriptas, &c. Hist. Brit. Defensio, edit. 1573. p. 26.

mention is made of Arthur and of his exploits, *nearly as they are described* in the History translated by Geoffrey; which life of Dubritius we know to have been annually recited on the festival of the saint, by the religious of Llandaff, in the cathedral of that place, *long before the time of Geoffrey**." He also quotes, to the same effect, a very antient MS. sent to him by the treasurer of St. David's†; and a Chronicle of the monastery of Carmarthen.

* Deinde in eodem libro ubi vita S. Dubritii recolitur, luculenta fit mentio de eodem Arthuro, et de rebus ab eo gestis, *ad eundem fere modum quo in historiâ ab Gauffrido translatâ memorantur.* Quam quidem vitam, *longe ante Gauffredi tempora,* in ecclesiâ Landavensi, die divi Dubritii memoriæ dicato, quotannis ab ipsius ecclesiæ cultoribus repetitam fuisse liquet. Ibid. p. 127.

† P. 128. Leo major, &c.—In fact, it is rather extraordinary that Geoffrey has made so little use of the lives of the saints in embellishing his Arthur. The life of St. Gildas would have afforded him the story of the rape of Guenever by Melwas king of Somersetshire. In the life of St. Gundlei (Cot. MSS. Vespasian A. xiv.) he might have found how Arthur, with his knights Bedwer and Kay, assisted that monarch in his loves with the princess Gladusa. In the life of St. Patern he would have learned how Arthur was swallowed up alive by the earth, in consequence of his attempt to seize the holy saint's robe, but released on exhibiting proper signs of contrition, &c.—These anecdotes were collected by the late industrious Mr. Ritson, amongst other materials, for a life of Arthur.

We therefore seem to be justified, by the plainest deductions of reasoning, by direct contemporary testimony, and by the internal evidence of the work itself, in concluding that Geoffrey's Chronicle is, as it professes to be, a translation from some British original; and that this original was compiled between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and presents a faithful picture of the traditions and fables then received as history. It would be a hopeless, and certainly not a very instructive undertaking, to inquire into the causes which led, in each particular instance, to the indiscriminate adoption of such discordant materials; but a late author has suggested, with respect to the character of Arthur, an explanation which accounts for the monstrous absurdity of his story, and appears to be founded in an equally intimate acquaintance with the history and mythology of the Britons. It is given in the "Cambrian Biography," a small but very curious work, composed by Mr. Owen, the modest and learned compiler of the Welsh Dictionary.

According to him there were two Arthurs. The first was a mythological, and perhaps allegorical personage; the son of *Uthyr Bendragon*, or "Wonder the supreme leader," and *Eigyr*, "the generating power." He was the *Arcturus*, or Great

Bear, and proprietor of the constellation Lyra, which is called by the Britons *Telyn Arthur*, or "Arthur's Harp." Many antient monuments, and Bardic memorial-stones, which in different parts of Britain still retain his name, are the mystical records of his attributes *. The history of this allegorical personage is obscurely figured in the Mabinogion, in some of which, and particularly (says Mr. Owen) "in that of Culhwch and Olwen, we recognise adventures which must have had a common origin with those of Hercules, and with the Argonautic voyage. Therein we meet with the Indian Menu, exactly by name, and with similar attributes, acting as one of the agents of Arthur, to recover Olwen, the representative of the fecundity of nature, he having engaged to exert all his means

* Such monuments are not confined to our island. A modern French traveller says, "La tradition conserve dans ces lieux (near Huelgoat in Bretagne) le souvenir de *l'enorme chateau d'Artus. Des rochers de granite entassés, donnent l'idée de ses vastes murailles.* On doit y trouver des trésors gardés par des démons, qui souvent traversent les airs sous la forme d'éclairs, et de feux follets, en poussant quelquefois des hurlemens affreux; ils se répètent dans les forêts, dans les gorges du voisinage, &c." Voyage dans le Finistere en 1794 et 1795. Paris l'an vii.—It is evident that the historical Arthur could have no right to such a castle.

for that purpose against the adverse powers.'' But he and his heroes fail; are laid to sleep for ages; but at length they are to rise and triumph.''

The other Arthur is well known to Welsh history, being celebrated in the songs of Llywarch Hên, Merddhin, and Taliessin, and recorded in the Triads, as a brave and generally successful warrior, but without any excessive or exaggerated praises. He was the son of Meirig ap Tewdrig; appears to have succeeded, about the year 510, to the throne of the Silures; and, having distinguished himself by a number of partial actions against the Saxons at the head of his own subjects, was elected, about 517, by the allied princes of Britain as leader of the confederacy. In this situation he continued to direct the military operations of his countrymen with such ability and success, as to give a temporary preponderance to the British arms till the year 540, when a dissension taking place in the government, his nephew Modred took part against him; entered into a league with the Saxons; and, after two years of contest with his uncle, at length risked his whole forces in the destructive battle of Camblan, which proved fatal to the leaders of both armies, and decided for ever the superiority of the Saxons.

Whether we suppose that Arthur was the real baptismal name of this warrior, or an appellation

conferred by the gratitude of British historians and poets on the temporary saviour of their country, we may easily believe that this similarity of name might ultimately tend to identify the two personages, and thus introduce into history all the mythological extravagancies of the Mabinogion. Mr. Owen's explanation, therefore, may at least be received, for the present, as an ingenious and probable conjecture; but its confirmation must depend on the testimony of those antient Welsh tales, of which it is expected that a correct and faithful English translation will shortly be given by him to the public.

SECTION V.

Inquiry into the State of Wales during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth Centuries.—Intimate Connections of the Welsh and Normans.—Influence of this on Romance.—State of the Welsh Tribes within the Scotish Border.—Probability that some original, and many translated Romances, were the Work of Scotish Poets.—Conclusion.

ALTHOUGH Geoffrey's British Chronicle, by which we have been so long detained, is justly regarded as one of the corner-stones of romantic fiction, yet its principal, if not sole effect, was to stamp the names of Arthur, Merlin, Kay, and Gawain with the character of historical veracity; and thus to authorize a compilation of all the fables already current respecting these fanciful heroes and their companions. For the reader will have observed that, concerning Sir Launcelot and his brothers; Sir Tristram; Sir Ywain; Joseph of Arimathea and the Sangréal; the round table, with its perilous seat; and the various quests and adventures which fill so many folio volumes, not one

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word is to be found in the Chronicle. These were subsequent additions, but additions apparently derived from the same source. The names, the manners of the heroes, and the scenes of their adventures, were still British; and, the taste for these strange traditions continuing to gain ground during at least two centuries, the whole literature of Europe was ultimately inundated by the nursery-tales of Wales and Armorica, as it had formerly been by the mythology of Greece and Egypt.

As this apparent revolution in literary taste took place at a time when the Cymric language and people were driven, both in this island and in France, to the western extremities of the two countries, it must perhaps be principally attributed to a cause already mentioned; viz. the early connexions of the Normans with the people of Bretagne, among whom they first formed their language, and from whom they probably received, and brought over with them to England, the first traces of those traditions which they afterwards found in a more perfect state among the Welsh of this island. But though this may be fairly received as a plausible and likely conjecture, it is worth while to examine whether the British nation was, during the twelfth century, so insulated and insignificant as it has been generally represented; or whether there were some

circumstances in its political situation which gave to it, in the eyes of the Norman conquerors of England, a degree of importance very superior to that which could have resulted from the contracted state of its territory.

Unfortunately, there is not one of our popular histories of England from which the reader could derive any satisfactory assistance in this inquiry. Indeed, it is chiefly to the researches of Mr. Whitaker, of Mr. Gibbon, and of Mr. Turner, that we are indebted for a rational account of the affairs of Britain during the Saxon æra; after which we are again left in darkness, having no guides but the very laconic history of Caradoc, together with a few hints from the Anglo-Norman writers of the same period. It is to be hoped that the industrious editors of the Welsh Archæology will ultimately supply us with more abundant materials, and that some future historian may be enabled to form a more satisfactory narrative of events from the Norman conquest to the final subjugation of Wales by Edward I.; but in the mean time, the little that can be gleaned respecting a subject hitherto so much neglected, will perhaps be thought worth collecting. A few short remarks on the antecedent period may be convenient to some readers, by saving

them the trouble of a reference to the authorities already mentioned.

It is now fully established that the Britons became independent on Rome about the year 410, and that, when abandoned to their own efforts, they were perfectly equal to their own protection, so long as they continued in any degree united. But the thirty municipal governments, into which they seem to have been divided, were little calculated to promote unanimity of council or of action in a people always ready to split into factions: and it may be concluded that they soon relapsed into their ancient habits, and were separated into clans, headed by ambitious chieftains always struggling with each other for a precarious superiority. The successful inroads of the Scots and Picts seem to have forced on the Britons the creation of an elective dictator or Pendragon, an officer apparently known to their earliest constitution; but when this dignity also was seized by usurpation, the whole country was plunged into irretrievable anarchy. Such was the state of things at the first arrival of the Saxons.

Hengist, whether brought to our shores by accident or by invitation, soon demanded and obtained, as the reward of his services, an independent esta-

blishment, which he afterwards continued to maintain and increase at the expense of the natives, whom his arrogance or their own fickleness provoked to hostilities. From this period, therefore, the isle of Thanet became Saxon-land, and the rest of the country Welsh-land; because, as Giraldus Cambrensis has justly observed, the Teutonic nations always gave to the Celtic the denomination of Welsh. Our island, therefore, was divided, about the middle of the fifth century, as it still is, into two parts, one of which has constantly continued to increase at the expense of the other, till their relative extent and population have been nearly reversed.

As the ultimate success of the Saxons is undeniable, the greater part of our historians have neglected to notice the slowness of their progress. Yet it appears that the west riding of Yorkshire was not completely subdued till 620, nor Lancashire till 670; more than two centuries of bloody warfare had therefore elapsed before the invaders were able to break the communication between the Britons of Wales and those of Cumberland and Strathcluyd. Cadwallon, who was killed in 631, and who is said to have fought against the Saxons no less than fourteen pitched battles, was apparently the last of the Welsh princes who attempted a regular contest for

victory in the open field; but they still continued to harass their enemies by a long and vexatious opposition, adopting the same mode of resistance which was afterwards employed by the Scots against Edward I.; avoiding all pitched battles, but pouring down from their hills with sudden and unexpected violence, and wasting the Saxon provinces with frequent and desultory attacks. The extensive forests, which then covered nearly all the heights of the midland country, insured a retreat to the marauding natives, and afforded pasturage for the numerous flocks and herds which formed their principal subsistence, and for the small but active breed of horses which furnished a formidable cavalry. The Saxon writers, perhaps, have related without much exaggeration several expeditions in which their armies penetrated into the very heart of Wales, wasting the country and destroying the cities; but though they conceal in studious silence their own losses, yet the famous rampart called Offa's dyke, erected as late as the middle of the eighth century, must be admitted as an undeniable testimony to the predatory activity of the Britons. The contest, however, became every day more unequal, because the law of gavel-kind, which prevailed in Wales, led to a constant subdivision of power and territory, whereas the numerous Saxon

colonies were gradually consolidated into a monarchy. The Welsh, therefore, were ultimately reduced to a sullen acquiescence in the greatness of their rivals, and were even compelled to pay, as an acknowledgment of Saxon superiority, an annual tribute, the amount of which is fixed in the laws of Howel Dha.

Mr. Hume has represented the Saxons, during the progress of their conquests, as exterminating or driving away the whole British population, and has even contended that they were compelled to do so for the security of their own subsistence: It is singular that this acute and able writer should have convinced himself by so strange a reason. That a body of northern pirates should have been unable to subsist in a flourishing Roman colony without destroying the cultivators of the land; and that they should have found it expedient, while harassed by continual warfare, to lay by the sword and to take the plough into their own hands, would scarcely appear credible even if a similar conduct had been attributed, on the best historical evidence, to the Franks and other barbarous conquerors; because the necessity of obtaining recruits by sea was a peculiar obstacle to Saxon population. Indeed, a fact so glaringly absurd could never have obtained admittance into our history, had it not been assumed at

the same time as a self-evident proposition, that our language and laws are purely northern, and exhibit no traces of any mixture between the Saxon conquerors and the native inhabitants. But this assumption has, on examination, been found to be false. There are good reasons for believing, that near one-third of our language is of Welsh origin; and, with respect to our laws, Mr. Whitaker has shown that the Saxon system of policy was grafted upon that of the British, though considerably modified, so as to suit the freer and milder government to which they had been previously accustomed; and that this system underwent very little change even at the Norman conquest, which has been generally considered as the epocha of almost universal innovation. Power and property, indeed, were transferred by that event into other hands; but the tenures under which they were held, and the services exacted as their price, are either mentioned by name, or described and defined in the various codes of laws enacted by our Saxon ancestors. A nearly similar scheme is seen in that of Howel Dha, which is professedly a collection and renovation of the usages long before established in Wales; where the law of succession, by requiring incessant subdivisions of property, had multiplied the services of vassalage to as great an extent as could be demanded by the

utmost refinements of the feudal system. Upon the whole, though it is certain that the leaders and princes of Britain defended their power with equal valour and obstinacy, it would be very rash to conclude that the whole body of their subjects preferred exile or extermination to a timid and disloyal acquiescence in the government of a foreign invader; or that this invader disdained to derive from the labours of his new subjects, either the necessaries of life, or those luxuries and useful arts which they had learned from the Romans. In short, all analogy seems to concur with the best evidence, in leading us to believe that the Saxons and Britons of the low lands were gradually incorporated, like the Franks and Gauls, though perhaps in very different proportions, so as to form one people.

The Norman conquest was an event which was beheld by the Welsh with the greatest exultation, because it revenged them on their enemies the Saxons, and on Harold, from whom they had suffered much; but they seem to have derived from it no advantage beyond the present gratification of their passions. Had William's success been less rapid and complete, it is probable that during his struggle for empire he might have invited the Welsh princes to share in the dangers and profits of his enterprise; but, having gained England by a

single battle, he succeeded of course to the claims of the Saxon monarchs, and having marched an army in 1080 as far as St. David's, received the homage and tribute of the Welsh nation. Some degree of intercourse appears to have taken place between the Norman and Cambrian lords, because we find the Normans called in as allies by Caradoc ap Griffith, and afterwards employed in some petty enterprises in Cardigan; while on the other hand a number of Welsh appear to have enlisted under the banners of the earl of Hereford. But what were exactly the relations between the Normans and their British neighbours; what was William's system of policy respecting them; or whether he had leisure to form any, amidst his various and important occupations, cannot be discovered from the imperfect notices of contemporary historians.

But the next reign furnishes us with some circumstances which, though generally passed over as unimportant, may perhaps throw some light on the obscure politics of this period. It seems that a petty baron of South Wales, named Einion ap Collwn, having by his military services ingratiated himself at the court of William Rufus, was dispatched to London by Jestyn ap Gwrgant, lord of Glamorgan, with orders to obtain, if possible, the succour of some Norman forces against Rhys ap

Tewdwr, prince of South Wales; and was promised, if his embassy should be successful, the hand of Jestyn's daughter in marriage. Einion accomplished his purpose, and engaged the services of Robert Fitz-Hamon, and twelve other knights, by whose valour the victory was secured to Jestyn, and Rhys was slain in the engagement. But the hand of the lady was now contemptuously withheld; and the mortified ambassador had no means of obtaining redress but by requesting the assistance of his allies against his former employer. His negotiations were again successful; Jestyn was defeated in his turn, and his lands, comprehending the whole lordship of Glamorgan, were divided between Fitz-Hamon and his companions. Such a tempting example could not be resisted by Norman cupidity. William Rufus was assaulted by daily solicitors for the grant of such lands in Wales as the adventurers might be able to conquer; and many of our early nobility, the Cecils, the Lacies, the Montgomeries, the Mortimers, and others, owed a considerable part of their great demesnes to the success of similar expeditions. Yet when William himself, a prince of great military talents, at the head of a veteran and victorious army, attempted the invasion of Wales in 1097, it is agreed on all hands that he was compelled to retreat

most ingloriously, and after suffering considerable losses.

If we pursue our examination through the following reigns, we shall find a succession of similar contradictions. Such was the increase of Norman influence in Wales, that Henry I. exercised there all the rights of a feudal sovereign; bestowed on his favourites the territories of such Welsh lords as he thought it convenient to dispossess; and even conferred on a Norman the vacant bishopric of St. David's. Yet his expedition in 1113 against Griffith ap Conan *, prince of North Wales, and Owen, prince of Powis, was by no means reputable to the royal army; and the caresses which he bestowed on these princes after their submission, and the subsequent progress of Griffith ap Rees, strongly confirm the assertion of the Welsh historians, that Henry's triumph, such as it was, resulted much more from his policy than from his military prowess.

During the troublesome reign of Stephen, the royal power was completely crippled by internal dissensions; but in that of Henry II. we find four

* It may perhaps be worth while to remark, that this prince, who was able to withstand the utmost efforts of a royal army, had been driven from his dominions by Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester.

great expeditions into Wales; and William of Malmesbury seems to consider it as a great cause of triumph, that the English monarch, by combining the exertions of a powerful navy with those of a vast army, had been enabled to extort the submission of the refractory Welshmen. If, therefore, we compare these mighty expeditions and imperfect successes with the very trifling effort by which Edward I. precipitated Llywelyn from his throne, and annexed his principality for ever to the English crown, we shall probably be convinced that the Welsh were indebted for the enjoyment of their independence, which lasted till near the close of the thirteenth century, to other important causes, in addition to the impracticable nature of their country, and to the bravery and pertinacity with which it was defended.

It will be remembered that, during this early period, the respective rights of kings, and of their barons or tenants in capite, were very ill defined, and that this was the source of frequent disputes in every part of Europe. During peace, when the barons were dispersed, they could only escape the capricious injustice of their sovereign by flight; unless they possessed such a degree of power as conferred a mischievous independence, and the means of resisting the just claims of the crown.

During war they formed a sort of volunteer army; had constant opportunities of consulting on the subject of their common interests; and often rendered abortive the best concerted enterprises, in cases where those interests might have been compromised by success. Now the independence of Wales, as affording a place of refuge to fugitives from arbitrary power; as offering almost impregnable positions for their fortified castles; as abounding with a tenantry inured to predatory expeditions, and ready to take arms at the first summons; was of the utmost importance to the whole body of Norman barons, and particularly to those who had been able to extort by force, or to obtain by matrimonial alliances with the native princes, a permanent settlement in the country. These last were among the most powerful of our nobility; and the successes of the first adventurers in Ireland, under Strongbow, afford a curious example of the power which they were capable of deriving from their Welsh vassals. It is therefore evident that every attempt at the subjugation of Wales on the part of the crown, was sure to be thwarted and opposed as much as possible by the officers of the royal army, all of whom were personally interested in rendering such expeditions abortive.

On the other hand, our monarchs were by no

means inattentive to their own interests, but employed all the engines of terror and of flattery to procure and preserve a predominant interest in the principality. When their arms were successful, they never failed to exact from the Welsh a number of hostages, usually chosen from the noblest youths of the country, on whom they revenged with remorseless severity every insurrection of their kindred; at the same time that they encouraged and received at their court, with the most flattering distinctions, all such Welsh lords as they were able to gain to their interest. At other times they endeavoured, by the allurements of a splendid alliance, to gain over the princes themselves; and David ap Owen and Llywelyn ap Jorwerth had the honour of being married to Norman princesses. All these efforts of policy were successful when guided by able hands; but in an age when power was attached rather to the person than to the authority of the sovereign, it was impossible that either flattery or terror, when employed by such kings as John or Henry III., should control the insubordination of the barons, or curb the restless activity of their Welsh allies. Accordingly the barons triumphed over the regal authority, and Llywelyn the Great appeared to have established, for a time, the antient independence of his country. The real

strength and importance of Wales, however, depended very much on the anarchy of the times; its weight appeared conspicuous only when it turned the scale between contending parties of its neighbours. It therefore vanished at the accession of Edward I., who succeeded to an undisputed throne with the reputation of eminent abilities. The Great Charter, now considered as law, must have fully satisfied the wishes of the wisest barons; the most turbulent were tired by the long duration of civil dissensions; all were disposed to obey a sovereign who knew how to exact obedience; Edward had also a party in Wales nearly equal to that of the reigning prince; so that in removing that prince from the throne, and annexing the principality to his own dominions, he had simply the air of revoking the grant of a royal fief, in consequence of the contumacy of a rebellious vassal.

During the long course of political intrigue which was ultimately terminated by this conquest, it is certainly reasonable to suppose that a degree of intercourse, fully sufficient to account for any exchange of literary materials, must have taken place between the Normans and the Welsh, as well as between these last and their brethren of Armorica, who stood in the same relation as themselves to the sovereigns of this country while dukes of Nor-

mandy: and the Cymric and Breton bards, following their respective lords to the court of a common sovereign, had every opportunity of comparing the traditional fables of their ancestors, and of imparting them to the French minstrels with whom they associated. But, as there is reason to believe that the British lays were seldom if ever committed to writing, it might be expected that different minstrels would tell the same story with some variations; that, unable to retain in their memory the whole of a long narrative, they would carry off, in the first instance, detached adventures, which they would afterwards connect as well as they were able; and that a system of traditional history, thus imperfectly preserved through the medium of a very loose translation, and already involved in much geographical and chronological confusion, would assume the fabulous appearance which we find in the French narratives called romances.

It has been necessary to follow, thus far, the history of the Norman minstrels, because it is certainly to them that we are indebted for the greater part of the romance histories now extant, which were afterwards avowedly translated by our English versifiers. But a very elegant and accurate writer has lately shown that this, though generally, is not universally true; and that a small number of

our earliest metrical tales were, most probably, first exhibited in an English dress, and then translated, or rather imitated, by French minstrels. As Mr. Scott's opinions always deserve attention, it may be proper to lay before the reader a short outline of the reasoning by which they are established.

It will be remembered that, during more than two centuries after the arrival of the Saxons, the whole western coast of this island, from the extremity of Cornwall to the river Clyde, continued to be occupied by the Britons, and that the conquest of Lancashire, about 670, first effectually severed the northern tribes of Cumbria and Strathclyde from all intercourse with those of modern Wales. This northern district, comprising the Roman provinces of Valentia and part of Maxima, had been more thickly occupied by the armies, and perhaps more civilized by the arts of Rome than any other part of Britain. It gave birth to Aneurin, Merlin, and Llywarch-Hen, the most antient and celebrated of the Welsh poets; it produced Bede and Adomnan, the earliest of the Saxon historians; and continued for ages to retain its literary superiority. Of its history very little is known,—except that, being defended by the strong posts of Dunbarton and Stirling, and in part by the cele-

brated barrier against the Picts, still known by the name of the Catrail, or war-dyke, the small kingdom of Strathclyde maintained its independence, during several centuries, against the Saxons of Northumbria, as well as against the separate efforts of the Scotish and Pictish sovereigns. But when these kingdoms became united in the person of Kenneth, about the year 843, it is probable that these Britons, though for a short time protected by Athelstan, became permanently tributary to Scotland; still, however, retaining their language and manners, and even their nominal sovereigns,—the last of whom, Ewen the Bald, attended Malcolm II. in 1018 to the battle of Carrum, against the Northumbrians. The British kingdom or principality of Cumberland, comprising the present shires of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and part of Lancashire, had been previously ceded to Scotland, as a sort of fief, about the middle of the tenth century; and in the beginning of the twelfth the earldom of Northumberland, of nearly the same extent as the present county, came by marriage to David earl of Cumberland, youngest son of Malcolm III., who thus united to the territories of the Picts and Scots nearly all those which had been possessed by the Angles of Bernicia, and by the Britons of Cumbria and Strathclyde

We must add that many Norman barons, disgusted by the conduct of William the Conqueror, retired to the court of Malcolm, where they were liberally entertained; that his sons were twice (in 1094 and 1097) assisted by Anglo-Norman armies in their contest with the usurper, Donald Bane; and that at the battle of the Standard most of David's men at arms are expressly stated to have been Normans. Scotland therefore, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, contained a still greater variety of inhabitants than England; but the several nations were placed, in the two countries, under very different circumstances.

In England, the possession of the soil had been wrested from the natives by the Saxons, after a very long and bloody struggle, maintained on both sides with inveterate animosity; and it is remarkable that, in consequence of the violent and intolerant character of Austin, the apostle of the Saxons, their conversion to Christianity had inflamed, instead of softening, the rancour of the rival nations. After the Norman conquest, the Saxons long ceased to have a political existence; being parcelled out in minute subdivisions, with few means of communicating with each other, and blindly subservient to their respective masters. In Scotland, on the contrary, the Scots and Picts, after

being frequently connected by such alliances as are compatible with a savage state of society, and engaging as friends in a long succession of predatory wars against the Romans, the Britons, and the Saxons, were finally amalgamated, after a short contest for the sovereignty, by Kenneth, who had pretensions to the crown of both nations; after which their joint forces successively overpowered the hostile tribes of Britons and Saxons within their reach. Neither religious differences nor mortifying political distinctions* appear to have prevailed among the people thus connected by their obedience to a common sovereign. It is probable, indeed, that they long continued to use their distinct languages, and to retain their appropriate laws and

* There is, in the curious old law book called "Regiam Majestatem," a law called "de Cro," (lib. iv. c. 36.) regulating the *assythment* to be paid by a homicide, according to the rank of the person slain. Skene says that these laws are consuetudinary; that he has seen them written *Gallice* (in French?), and that they are entitled *Leges, inter Brettos et Scotos.* They contain many Celtic or British terms, and so do various old charters respecting Cumberland and Dumfries-shire. This insertion of British customs in feudal investitures strongly argues a mixture of the people. With respect to religion, which the Picts received from the Scots or Irish, the utmost harmony seems to have prevailed within the northern frontier.

customs; but that this was chiefly owing to their geographical boundaries, and to the paucity of their wants, which prevented a frequent intercourse. They were separated by their general barbarism, not by their reciprocal animosity. When, therefore, these impediments were in a great measure removed by Malcolm III., who transferred the seat of government from the Scotish to the Saxon part of his dominions, a language, in which the Saxon, more or less modified by an admixture of the British, and perhaps of the French, was predominant, could not fail of being formed; and it was likely to acquire a certain degree of perfection much sooner than the English of the south, which was gradually developed under far less auspicious circumstances.

This priority of the northern to the southern English dialect is proved by a passage of Robert de Brunne, which had been hitherto misunderstood, and which Mr. Scott has happily elucidated by exhibiting, in the romance of Sir Tristram, composed by Thomas of Erceldoun, a specimen of the quaint stanza and elaborate and artificial style attributed by the historian to that poet and to his countryman Kendal. He has also shown, by a reference to antient charters, that the Scotish minstrels of this early period enjoyed all the privileges and distinc-

tions possessed by the Norman trouveurs, whom they nearly rivalled in the arts of narration, and over whom they possessed one manifest advantage in their familiar acquaintance with the usual scenes of chivalry. Carlisle, as we learn from Froissart, was the Carduel of romance, the favourite seat of Arthur; and between that place and Penryth is his "round table," which, like his "seat" and his "oven," still records his memory. Bamborough Castle, as we learn from Knighton, was the "chastel orgueilleux," and Berwick the "chateau de la joyeuse garde," the favourite habitation of Sir Launcelot. Ettrick-forest, the Sylva Caledonia beloved by Merlin, whose remains are supposed to have been buried at Drummelziar, was included in the territories of Urien and Ywain. Galloway, according to Mr. Whitaker, was the patrimony of the celebrated Gawain. At Stowe, in the vale of the Gala (the Wedale, or vallis sanctus of Nennius), a few miles above Melros, was the church of St. Mary's, where Arthur, as the British historian assures us, deposited a piece of the true cross; and at Meigle in Angus, between Coupar and Forfar, tradition still points out the tomb of "Dame Ganore," the beautiful Guenever. The Scotish minstrels, therefore, thus surrounded by the memorials of romance, and having easy access to the tradi-

tionary tales of Strathclyde and Cumbria*, were likely to be considered as the most authentic depositaries of those narratives; and accordingly Thomas of Erceldoun is cited in this character by a French minstrel, of whose life of Sir Tristram two valuable MS. fragments are preserved in Mr. Douce's very curious library. Another Thomas, or perhaps the same, is in like manner quoted, as the best authority for the narrative, in a French metrical history of "King Horn;" a romance of which the scenery and names are evidently Northumbrian: and the adventures of "Wade," twice noticed by Chaucer, must evidently be referred to the same country, because the castle of the hero stood near the Roman wall, which he is said to have surmounted. Besides these, the fragments of "Sir Gawain" and of "Sir Galaron," published by Mr. Pinkerton, have all the marks of original composition, and are with great probability assigned by Mr. Scott to the thirteenth century; a very early period certainly, but which is justified by the internal evidence of style,—

* The intercourse between the Cymric and Saxon tribes was no less likely to affect the music than the poetry of the latter; and Mr. Scott has, with great appearance of probability, attributed to this circumstance the analogy between the Northumbrian and Welsh modes of singing, remarked by Giraldus Cambrensis.

an evidence perfectly admissible in this case, because the early eminence of the Scotish minstrels is proved by the authority of Robert de Brunne, and by that of Wyntown's Chronicle.

As a further confirmation of this opinion, it may be added, that while Erceldoun, Kendal, and Hucheon, poets of the North, are celebrated by our early historians; while every antient ballad bears testimony to the excellence of the minstrels "from the North country;" and while our MSS. abound with metrical romances written in the northern dialect; we do not possess one, anterior to the time of Chaucer, which can with certainty * be ascribed to a poet of South-Britain.

It is now time to close this long and desultory, and perhaps very tedious introduction. Many readers of the following old-wives'-tales will, pro-

* It is true that the Life of Alexander, the most spirited perhaps of our early romances, has been ascribed to Adam Davie, Marshall of Stratford le bow, and author of some metrical visions and other poems in the reign of Edward II., and that Mr. Ritson and myself have adopted this supposition on the authorities of Bishop Tanner and Mr. Warton. But, having carefully perused every line of the romance, I am now convinced that they were mistaken. No author's name is mentioned in it; and its style, which nearly resembles that of Merlin, has no sort of analogy with that of Adam Davie's visions, as quoted by Mr. Warton.

bably, be little solicitous to know whether the Danes, the Arabians, or the Britons, supplied the original materials of such compositions. But the inquiry having given rise to much controversy amongst men of great learning and genius, it did not altogether depend upon the present writer to dismiss it with a very slight notice. It seemed to him, that the best way of avoiding all appearance of competition with his abler predecessors was, to lay before his readers at large his whole stock of materials; and this, he hopes, will be accepted as his excuse for the motley character of the preceding pages.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

PETRUS ALPHONSUS.

For the following short, but accurate, analysis of this very curious work I am indebted to my friend Mr. Douce.

There is a copy of the original Latin work entitled "Alphonsus de Clericali Disciplina," in the British Museum (Add. Reg. 10 B xiii), but it is very defective at the end. There are also two French metrical versions of the same (MSS. Harl. 527 and 4338), the former wanting a leaf at the end, and the latter imperfect in the middle; but they vary considerably in the number and arrangement of the stories, which are generally more ample, and perhaps better told, than in the Latin copy. It should seem, therefore, that the French translator has taken some liberties in attempting to improve his original, or that he has used a more perfect copy than that which is here mentioned; but this must remain a question till other Latin copies shall be

examined, some of which may possibly be preserved in the National Library at Paris.

With respect to the French MS. of *Pierre Anfors* (who is thus named in both the Harleian MSS.), which existed at St. Germain des Prés, No. 1830, and has been partly edited, and partly abridged, by Barbazan, under the title of "Castoiement d'un Pere à son Fils," we must suppose that it was either very imperfect, or very inattentively examined by the editor, who treats the work as anonymous, and appears to have known nothing concerning the author, Petrus Alphonsus, a converted Jew, who flourished in 1106, and was godson to Alphonsus I. king of Arragon. These stories are professedly borrowed from the Arabian fabulists, and consist of admonitions from Salaan, or, as the author says he is called in the Arabian tongue, Lucamam, to his son, illustrated by examples, which are arranged in the following order.

1. Story of the false friend and of the dead calf in a sack. See Le Grand, fabl. 3. 255.—It is remarkable that Le Grand, as well as Barbazan, seems to have known nothing about Petrus Alphonsus, whom he classes, under his Frenchified name of Pierre Anfors, amongst the Norman fableours.—This story occurs in the Gesta Romanorum, chap. 129.

2. The well-known tale of the two merchants of Baldac (Bagdat) and of Egypt. See Le Grand, fabl. 3. 262. Boccace, day x. nov. 8. Gesta Rom. ch. 170.
3. The mule who was ashamed of his father, the ass, and boasted of his grandfather, who was a horse.
4. The man, the ungrateful serpent, and the fox. Here the serpent is found tied to a tree, and by the fox's cunning tied up again, and not put into a sack, as elsewhere related. See Gest. Rom. ch. 174. Dir. Hum. Vitæ, or Pilpay.
5. A poet claims, as a reward for his verses, that the king should appoint him his porter, with liberty to demand a penny of every hunch-back, another of every leper, another of every one-eyed man, &c. A crooked man comes to the gate, and, having refused to pay the first penny, is proved to have all the other defects, and taxed accordingly. See Le Grand, fabl. 3. 252. Gesta Rom. ch. 157.
6. A man, in opposition to the advice of his friend, goes into a house where people were drinking and rioting. A robber takes refuge amongst them, and all the company are hanged.
7. Two persons hear a woman singing, &c.—A very silly tale, and not worth notice.

8. A vine-dresser wounds his eye while working in his vineyard. In the mean time his wife was occupied by her gallant. On the husband's return, she contrives the lover's escape by kissing her spouse on the other eye. Le Grand, fabl. 4. 158. Gest. Rom. ch. 121. and many of the Italian novelists.

9. An artful old woman conceals her daughter's gallant from the husband, by spreading a sheet before his eyes in such a manner as to give the lover an opportunity of escaping. Le Grand, fabl. 4. 160. Gesta Rom. ch. 122. &c. &c.

10. A nearly similar story, in which the mother puts a sword into the hands of the gallant, and persuades the husband, when he returns, that the young man had taken refuge from the pursuit of three assassins. Le Grand, fabl. 4. 160. &c. &c.

11. A king requires his minstrel to tell him a long story that will lull him to sleep. The minstrel begins a tale concerning a countryman who had to cross a ferry with 600 sheep by two at a time, and then falls asleep in the midst of his story. The king wakens him; but the minstrel requests that the countryman may be allowed to ferry over the sheep before he resumes his narrative. Le Grand, fabl. 1. 210. and in Don Quixote.

12. Stratagem of an old woman in favour of a young

gallant. She persuades his mistress, who had rejected his addresses, that her little dog was formerly a woman, and so transformed in consequence of her cruelty to her lover. The MSS. vary much in this story. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 459. Gest. Rom. ch. 28.

13. A woman, shut up in a tower by a jealous husband, throws a stone into a well. The man, supposing that his wife had drowned herself, runs to her relief. She escapes in the mean time, and contrives in her turn to shut him into the tower. See the Seven Wise Masters. Boccace, day 7. nov. 4. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 143. Moliere, George Dandin.

14. By the stratagem of an old woman, a man recovers a sum of money which he had left in the hands of a treacherous friend, who refused to restore it. A person is instructed to procure some strong gilt trunks; to fill them with stones; and to offer to deposit the pretended treasure in the hands of the defrauder. While this negotiation is going on, the claimant is sent to repeat his demand; which the false friend now complies with, lest any suspicion should fall on his honesty in the presence of the new dupe. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 282. Gesta Rom. ch. 118. Boccace, day 8. nov. 10. Arab. N. Ent.

15. A man deposits 10 casks of oil in the house of a neighbour, whom he afterwards accuses of having stolen a part of it. By the sagacity of a philosopher, who causes the dregs of the oil to be examined, the knavery of the accuser is discovered. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 19.

16. A man loses a purse of gold, containing a golden serpent with eyes of hyacinth; and endeavours to defraud a poor man who had found it of the promised reward, by asserting that the purse contained two serpents, &c: The dispute being referred to a philosopher, the purse is adjudged to the finder. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 24.

17. A countryman advises some travellers respecting the road, &c. &c.

18. Two citizens and a countryman, travelling to Mecca, are reduced to a single loaf. It is agreed that he who dreams the best dream shall eat it. The countryman disappoints the intended fraud of his companions, and gets the loaf. Le Grand, fab. 2. 328. Gest. Rom. ch. 106. also in p. 51 of the "Historia Jeschuæ Nazareni," a blasphemous life of J. C., of Jewish invention.

19. Story of some cloth-cutters, and of the apprentice Bedwi, who procures his master a beating for defrauding him of his honey. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 426.

20. Two minstrels being at a royal feast, one of them places all his bones on the plate of his companion, and complains to the king that he had eaten all the meat which belonged to them. The other retorts, by asserting that the first had devoured meat, bones, and all. See Gladwin's Moonshee. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 95.

21. Story of the countryman and of the bird who promised him three things for his liberty. This is Le Grand's "Lai de l'Oiselet," 3. 430. Way's "Lay of the little Bird." Lydgate's "The Chorle and the Bird."

22. Story of the wolf, the countryman, and the fox. The wolf is left in a well, looking after a supposed cheese made by the moon's image on the water.—Imitated by La Fontaine in his fables.

23. A thief breaks his neck by catching at a ray of the moon. In the Directorium Humanæ Vitæ, i. e. the Latin version from the Hebrew of Pilpay. Le Grand, fabl. 3. 288. Gesta Rom. ch. 136.

24. A man desires his servant to shut the door. The servant, who is a very idle fellow, affirms that it is shut. In the morning, being ordered to open it, he says that, having foreseen this wish, he had neglected to shut it. The master now perceives his laziness, and orders him, the sun

being risen, to get up and go to his work. He now asks for victuals, and, being asked if he was accustomed to eat during the night, replies, "If it be night, suffer me to sleep." Another time his master orders him to rise in the night to discover whether it rained. He calls the dog, who lay at the door, and, finding its feet dry, pronounces that the weather is fair. Being asked if the fire was extinguished, he calls the cat, and, finding her cold, answers in the affirmative.—Story 60 in Gladwin's Moonshee. In Melandri Jocor. centur. 2. 210.

25. The same servant, who is a negro named Maimundus, relates to his master a curious story exhibiting a climax of calamities. See it in Le Grand, fabl. 4. 119.

26. Account of Socrates, who retired from the world and lived in a tub, the back of which he turned to the wind and rain, and the front to the sun. Some hunters come by and laugh at him while he is lousing himself. He says to them, as they stand between him and the sun, "What ye cannot give do not take away."—They insult him again, and endeavour to remove his habitation; but, not being able to effect it, desire him to remove his vile carcase, that he might not offend the king, who was coming that way to

hunt. He tells them that "their lord is not his lord, but rather the servant of his servant." The king converses with him, and he explains his saying, &c.

These are all that the Latin copy contains. The following are supplied from the French.

27. A thief breaks into a house, and, finding more treasure than he can carry away, picks out the best part. He forgets himself, and remains till day-break, when he is secured by the people of the house.

28. Story of Abraham entertaining the angels.

29. A philosopher finds a tomb inscribed "As I am, you shall be, &c."

30. A woman, in the absence of her husband, sends for her gallant, and, wishing to bathe with him (a sort of prelude in antient times to amorous dalliance), borrows her neighbour's bathing-tub. See Le Grand, fabl. 3. 455.

31. A merchant goes on a visit to his brother, who is steward to a certain king. The monarch receives the merchant with great politeness, and offers him a considerable farm; which he refuses, on finding that the king was in the habit of spending all his revenues in time of peace, and, consequently, in case of war, could only defend

himself by levying heavy contributions on his subjects.

Besides the foregoing, there are several tales from Alphonsus, collected together at the end of the earliest collection of the Æsopian fables now extant. It is the work translated by Caxton, is in Latin, and without date.

No. II.

MARIE'S LAYS.

A LATE critic (Mr. Ritson) has denied the Armorican origin of these lays; but it is quite needless to discuss his opinions concerning a work which he had manifestly neglected to read, or was unable to understand.' It will be shorter and less tiresome to lay before the reader an abstract of the whole collection, which is in many respects interesting, because it was certainly written in this country; was never printed; and is known to exist only in one manuscript, viz. Harl. MSS. No. 978.

The lays are twelve in number, and are arranged in the following order: 1. Guigemar; 2. Equitan; 3. Lai le Freisne; 4. Bisclaveret; 5. Lanval; 6. Les deux Amans; 7. Ywonec; 8. Laustic; 9. Milun; 10. Chaitivel; 11. Chevrefoil; and 12. Eliduc.

About 56 lines at the beginning of the work are intended as a general prologue, and 26 more form the introduction to the first lay. This prefatory matter is written in a style of considerable obscu-

rity, which was perhaps intentional, because the author defends it by the example of the antients, and quotes Priscian as her authority. But the doctrine which she means to inculcate is, that those who possess talents are bound to employ them, and that study is always good, as a preservative from vice and from affliction. She tells us that she had therefore formed a plan of translating, from Latin into romance, *sôme good history*; but found that her project had been anticipated by others. She then thought of the numerous lays which she *had heard, and had carefully treasured in her memory.* These, she was sure, must be new to the generality of her readers; and in this confidence she offers to the king (probably our Henry III.) the fruits of her labours. After complaining that she has met with envy and persecution where she deserved praise, she declares her intention to persevere, and to relate, as briefly as possible, such stories as she *knows to be true,* and to have been *formed into lays by the Britons.*

Les contes ke jeo sai *verrais,*
Dunt li Bretun ont fait les lais
Vus conterai asez briefment, &c.

No. 1. Guigemar.

This lay, consisting of 942 lines, having been faith-

fully analysed by Le Grand, and beautifully translated by Mr. Way, requires no further notice in this place.

No. 2. Equitan, 282 lines.

Equitan was a prince of Bretagne, who was so passionately attached to the amusements of chivalry, that he cared neither for business nor gallantry. Nothing but the necessity of heading his troops could withdraw him from the pleasures of hunting and hawking; and the whole business of the state was managed by his steward, a man of equal loyalty and experience. Unfortunately this steward had married a beautiful wife. The prince heard her much praised; admitted that these praises were deserved; and insensibly began to think his hunting and hawking most agreeable when it conducted him, at the end of the day, to his steward's castle, where he had a natural opportunity of seeing and conversing with the lovely hostess. Equitan was overcome by his passion almost before he was conscious of being in love: he began by reflecting with shame and remorse on the baseness of the part which he was preparing to act, and ended, as usual, by determining not to endure the misery of privation and disappointment, if he could succeed in seducing the wife of his friend. Having devised, in the course of a sleepless night, as many argu-

ments as were necessary to satisfy his own morality, and formed a plan for securing a long interview with his mistress, he set off for the chace; returned after a short time under pretence of a sudden indisposition; and, retiring to his bed, sent to request a visit from the lady, who perhaps was not much surprised at receiving from the invalid a very long and eloquent declaration of his passion. To this she replied, in the first instance, by very proper expostulations; but when at length the enamoured Equitan assured her, with the utmost solemnity, that, if her husband were out of the way, he would gladly make her the partner of his throne, she suddenly gave way to the splendid offer, and proposed, with his assistance, to destroy the steward so artfully that neither actor in the plot should incur the slightest suspicion. Equitan, far from being startled by this atrocious proposition, readily assured her of his concurrence, and she continued thus: "Return, sir, for the present, to your court; then come to pursue your diversion in this forest, and again take up your abode under our roof. You must once more pretend to be indisposed; cause yourself to be blooded; and on the third day order a bath, and invite my husband to bathe and afterwards to dine with you. I will take care to prepare the bathing-tubs. That which I destine for him

shall be filled with boiling water, so that he will be instantly scalded to death; after which you will call in your attendants and his, and explain to them that your affectionate steward had suddenly expired in the act of bathing." The prince readily consented to take his part in this diabolical plot, and, at the end of three months, every thing was arranged for its execution. The baths were actually filled and placed before the respective beds; but the steward, who had risen early in the morning, for some purpose of business or amusement, happening to stay rather beyond the appointed time, the two lovers had met during his absence, and, forgetting that their guilty project was not yet accomplished, had proceeded to satisfy their mutual passion. A maid was stationed at the door, near which stood the fatal bath; but the husband returning with precipitation suddenly forced open the door, in spite of her feeble opposition, and discovered his wife in the arms of Equitan. The prince, under the first impulse of surprise and remorse, started from the bed at the appearance of his steward, and, heedlessly plunging into the boiling bath, was instantly suffocated or scalded to death. The husband, almost at the same instant, seized on the guilty partner of his bed, and threw her headlong after her paramour. Thus were the wicked punished by the means which they

had devised for the destruction of another; and such is the substance of the lay which was composed by the Bretons under the name of Equitan.

No. 3. Lai le Freisne, 528 lines.

This lay was translated into English by some unknown but nearly contemporary writer; and this version, which still exists in the Auchinleck MS., having been kindly communicated to me by my friend Mr. Walter Scott, it will be found among the miscellaneous romances of the present collection.

No. 4. Bisclaveret, 318 lines.

Our author informs us that this is the Breton name for an animal which the Normans call Garwalf; and adds that formerly men were frequently metamorphosed into this beast, and during such times were the most ferocious and destructive of the inhabitants of the forest*. She then proceeds to her story.

* It seems that this superstition still remains in Bretagne. "Dans l'opinion des Bretons, ces mêmes hommes se revêtent, pendant la nuit, de peaux de loups, et en prennent quelquefois la forme, pour se trouver à des assemblées où le démon est supposé présider. Ce que l'on dit ici des déguisements et des courses nocturnes de ces prétendus *homme-loups*,

There lived formerly in Bretagne a baron who was comely in his person, wise, courteous, adored by his neighbours, much beloved by his sovereign, and married to a noble and beautiful lady, for whom he felt the warmest affection, which she appeared to return with equal sincerity. But she had observed that her husband was regularly absent during three days in the week, and, suspecting that there must be something mysterious in this periodical disappearance, resolved, if possible, to extort the secret. She redoubled her expressions of tenderness; bitterly lamented her frequent intervals of widowed solitude; and, affecting to be persuaded that he bestowed on a mistress the many hours of separation from his wife, earnestly conjured him to

dont l'espece n'est pas encore entierement éteinte dans l'ancienne Armorique, nous rapelle ce que l'histoire rapporte des *lycantrophes* d'Irlande—et ce qu' Herodote dit des *Neures*. (Origines Gauloises par La Tour d'Auvergne Corret. cap. 2.) Mr. Walker, in his historical memoirs of the Irish bards, quotes the following lines from a poem descriptive of the manners of the Irish:

> The next strange story which his ears
> Receiv'd, was of some wolves and bears,
> Who once were men of worth and fame,
> But, by enchantment, brutes became;
> And would, if tales sing truth, obtain
> Their former human shape again.

calm her apprehensions by the disclosure of the truth. The good baron warmly conjured her in his turn to desist from an inquiry which would only lead to their permanent separation, and to the extinction of all her fondness; but her tears and blandishments prevailed, and he confessed that, during half the week, he became a Bisclaveret. The lady, though she felt a secret horror at finding herself the wife of a wolf, dissembled her disgust, and pursued her inquiry. Were his clothes also transformed? or was he naked at the time of his transformation? The baron answered, that he was naked. Where then did he leave his dress? To this question he endeavoured to avoid giving an answer, declaring that, should this secret be discovered, he would be condemned to wear his brute form through life; and observing that, if she loved him, she could have no wish to learn that of which the knowledge would be useless to her, while its disclosure would be fatal to him. But obstinacy is always an over-match for rational argument. The wife still insisted; and the good-natured husband ultimately told that, "by the side of an old chapel, situated on the road to the thickest part of the forest, was a bush which over-hung and concealed an excavated stone, in which he constantly deposited his garments." The wife, being now mistress

of the baron's fate, quickly formed her decision. She sent for a gallant, whose love she had hitherto rejected; offered him immediate possession of her person; taught him the means of confirming her husband's metamorphosis; and, when the baron's friends had finally renounced all hopes of his return, married her new favourite, and conveyed to him a large inheritance, the fruit of their joint treachery. In about a year the king went to hunt in the forest, and, after a chace which lasted the whole day, had nearly run down the unfortunate Bisclaveret; when the persecuted animal rushing from the thicket, and running straight up to the king, seized his stirrup with his fore-paw, began to lick his feet, and with the most piteous whinings to implore his protection. The king was, at first, dreadfully frightened; but his fear soon gave way to pity and admiration. He called his attendants to witness the miracle; ordered the dogs to be whipped off; solemnly took the brute under his royal protection; and returned to his palace, closely followed by his savage attendant. Bisclaveret soon became an universal favourite; he was fed with the greatest care, slept in the royal apartments, and, though indefatigable in his attentions to the king his master, returned with gratitude the caresses of the courtiers, who admired and esteemed, without

envying, his superior intelligence and accomplishments. At length the king having thought fit to summon a plenar court, his barons flocked from all quarters to the festival, and, among the rest, the husband of the false lady. No one had thought of paying the least attention to Bisclaveret, whose gentleness was even more remarkable than his sagacity: but no sooner did the knight make his appearance than the animal attacked him with the greatest fury, and was scarcely prevented, even by the interposition of the king himself, from tearing him to pieces. The same scene occurred a second time, and occasioned infinite surprise; for all agreed that Bisclaveret must have had good reasons for his conduct, though it was not easy to conjecture what injury he had received. Not long after this the king went to hunt in the forest where the animal had been found; and the wicked wife, as lady of the manor, having sent before her a magnificent present, set forth to pay her court to her sovereign. Bisclaveret saw her approach, flew upon her, and instantly tore her nose from her face. This act of discourtesy to a lady excited universal indignation: even the king himself took part against his favourite, who would have been punished with instant death, but for the interference of an aged counsellor. "This lady, sir," said he to the king,

" was the wife of that knight whom you so tenderly loved, and whose unaccountable disappearance you have so long regretted. The baron whom Bisclaveret first assaulted is her present husband. Your favourite animal, whose gentleness and sagacity appear nearly human, becomes ferocious only on the appearance of these two. There is certainly some mystery in this, which the lady, if imprisoned and interrogated, could probably discover. Britany is the country of wonders—

Mainte merveille avum veü
Qui en Bretaigne est avenu."

In compliance with this advice the lady was put in close confinement, the whole secret extorted, and the clothes of Bisclaveret duly restored. But when they were brought before him the animal appeared to survey them with listlessness and inattention; and the king had again recourse to his sapient counsellor, by whose advice they were transferred to the royal bed-chamber, where Bisclaveret was left, without witnesses, to effect, if possible, his metamorphosis. In due time the king, attended by two of his barons, repaired to the chamber, and found the knight, in his natural form, asleep on the royal bed. His master immediately embraced him with the utmost affection; restored all his estates; added

more; and banished the wicked wife, together with her paramour, from the country. It is remarkable that, after her accident, she became very prolific, and bore several children, all of whom were females, and distinguished by the disagreeable singularity of being born without noses. Be assured that this adventure is strictly true, and that the lay of Bisclaveret was composed for the purpose of making it known to the latest posterity.

No. 5. Lanval, 646 lines.

For the substance of this lay, also, the reader is referred to Le Grand's collection of fabliaux, and to Mr. Way's translation.

No. 6. Les deux Amants, 242 lines.

In Neustria, now called Normandy, is a single mountain of unusual height and verdure, called the mountain "of the two lovers," in consequence of an adventure to which it gave rise, and of which the Bretons have formed a lay. Close to it are the remains of a city, now reduced to a few houses, but formerly opulent, founded by the king of the Pistreins, whence it was called Depistreins, and the neighbouring valley Val de Pistre. This king had an only daughter, whom he loved with such tenderness that he could not bear to be separated from

her. With a view to check the pursuits of the lovers, whom her beauty and accomplishments attracted, he published a decree, that her hand should never be granted but to a suitor who should be able to carry her, without resting, from the bottom to the top of the adjoining mountain. Many attempted the enterprise, for presumption is common; none achieved it, because its execution was barely possible. The suitors disappeared, one by one, and the beautiful princess seemed doomed to eternal celibacy. There was one youth, the son of a neighbouring baron, who was a favourite with the king and with the whole court, and whose assiduities, which were dictated by an unconquerable and sincere passion, ultimately gained the lady's warmest affections. His discretion was such, that their mutual affection was long a secret to all the world: but this discretion became, at length, almost intolerable; and the youth, hopeless of fulfilling the condition which alone could obtain the hand of his mistress, earnestly conjured her to fly with him from her father's court. To this, however, she would not consent; but suggested a mode of accomplishing their wishes more compatible with her filial piety. "I have," said she, "a rich aunt who resides and has studied during thirty years at Salerno. In that celebrated school she has so com-

pletely acquired the art of medicine; has learned so many *salves* and drugs; has so studied *herbs* and *roots*, that she will be enabled to compose for you *electuaries* and *drinks* capable of communicating to you the degree of vigour necessary for the accomplishment of the trial prescribed by my father's law. To her you shall bear a letter from me, and at your return you shall demand me from the king on the terms to which he has himself assented." The lover thanked her; went home; provided the necessary assortment of rich cloths, and other merchandize, of palfreys, beasts of burthen, and attendants, and set off for Salerno. His mission was perfectly successful. The good aunt's electuaries rendered him much more athletic than before; and he brought with him, in a small vial, an elixir capable of instantly restoring the strength at the moment of complete exhaustion. He therefore returned full of confidence, and claimed the trial; which was granted. The king, having summoned all his principal vassals to behold the ceremony, conducted his daughter into the great plain on the banks of the Seine, and found the youth already stationed at the foot of the mountain. The lovely princess had scarcely tasted food since the departure of her lover; she would gladly have wasted herself to the lightness of air for the purpose of diminishing

his labour. Of clothes she wore none, excepting a shift which closely enveloped her. Her lover catching her up with one hand, and bearing the precious vial in the other, appeared perfectly unconscious of the burthen, and bore her, with the rapidity of lightning, more than half way up the mountain: but here the princess perceived that his breath began to fail, and earnestly conjured him to have recourse to his medicine. He replied that he was still full of vigour; that he was too much within sight of the multitude below; that their cries, on seeing him stop even for an instant, would annoy and dishearten him; and that, while able to proceed alone, he would not appeal to preternatural assistance. At two thirds of the height the princess felt him totter under the weight, and again repeated her earnest entreaties. But he no longer heard or listened to her: exerting his whole remains of strength, he staggered with her to the top, still bearing the untasted vial in his hand, and dropped dead on the ground. His mistress, thinking that he had only fainted, knelt down by his side, applied the elixir to his lips, but found that life had left him. She then dashed the vial on the ground, uttered a dreadful shriek, threw herself on the body, and instantly expired. The king and his attendants, much surprised at not seeing the

lovers return, ascended the mountain, and found the youth fast locked in the arms of the princess. By command of her father they were buried on the spot in a marble coffin, and the mountain still retains the name of "the two lovers." Around their tomb the earth exhibits an unceasing verdure; and hither the whole country resort for the most valuable herbs employed in medicine, which owe their origin to the contents of the marvellous vial.

No. 7. Ywonec, 552 lines.

There lived once in Britain an old knight of great opulence, who was lord of Caerwent, a city situated on the river Duglas. He had married, when far advanced in years, a young wife of high birth and transcendent beauty, in hopes of begetting an heir to his great estates; but when, at the end of seven years, this hope was frustrated, he locked her up in his strong castle, under the care of his sister, an aged widow lady of great devotion and asperity of temper. His own amusements were confined to the chace; those of his sister to thumbing her psalter, and chanting its contents: the young lady had no solace but in her tears. One morning in April, when the birds begin to sing the songs of love, the old gentleman had risen early, and awakened his sister, who carefully shut the

doors after him while he set forth for the woods, and his young wife began her usual lamentations. She execrated the hour when she was born, and the fatal avarice of her parents, for having united her to an old jealous tyrant, who was afraid of his own shadow, and debarred her even from going to church. She had heard that the country round her prison was once famed for adventures; that young and gallant knights used to meet, without censure or impediment, beautiful and affectionate mistresses. But her lot was endless misery (for her tyrant was certainly immortal), unless the supreme Disposer of events should, by some miracle, suspend the listlessness of her present existence. She had scarcely finished this ejaculation, when the shadow of a large bird, which nearly intercepted all the light proceeding from the narrow window of her room, arrested her attention. The bird, a falcon of the largest size, flew into the chamber and perched at the foot of her bed. While she gazed on the falcon it gradually assumed the figure of a young and handsome knight. She started, changed colour, and drew a veil over her face, but still gazed and listened with some fear, much astonishment, but more pleasure. The knight soon broke silence. He begged her not to be alarmed; confessed that his mode of visiting was new, and rather mysteri-

ous; but that a falcon was a gentle and noble bird, whose figure ought not to create suspicion. He was a neighbouring prince, who had long known and loved her, and wished to dedicate the remainder of his days to her service, if she would accept him as her lover. The lady, gradually removing her veil, ingenuously told him that he was much handsomer, and apparently more amiable, than any man she had ever seen; and that she should be happy to accept him as lover, if such a connection could be legitimate, and if he believed in God. The prince highly approved of this scruple; entered at large into the articles of his creed; and concluded by advising that she should feign herself sick; send for her chaplain; and direct him to bring the host; "when," said he, "I will assume your appearance, and receive the sacrament in your stead." The lady was of course satisfied with this proposal; and, when the old woman came in and summoned her to rise, she professed to be at the point of death, and entreated the immediate assistance of the chaplain. Such a request, in the absence of her lord, could not be regularly granted: but a few screams and a fainting fit removed the old lady's doubts, and she hobbled off in search of the chaplain, who immediately brought the host; and Muldumarec (for such was the name of the

falcon-prince), assuming the appearance of his mistress, went through the sacred ceremony with becoming devotion. The lovers now considered themselves as man and wife, and acted accordingly. The lady's supposed illness enabled the prince to protract his visit; but at length the moment of separation came, and the lady expressed her wish for the frequent repetition of their interviews.—"Nothing is so easy," said Muldumarec: "whenever you express an ardent wish to see me, I shall instantly be with you. But beware of that old woman. She will probably discover our secret, and betray it to her brother; and I announce to you that the moment of discovery will be that of my death." With these words he flew off. His mistress, with all her caution, was unable to conceal entirely the complete change in her sensations. Her solitude, formerly so irksome, was become the source of her greatest delight; her person, so long neglected, again became an object of her solicitude; and her artful and jealous husband, on his return from the chace, often discovered in her features the traces of a voluptuous satisfaction, of which his conscience told him that he was not the author. His vague suspicions were, after a time, communicated to his sister; but she, who thought herself the young lady's sole companion, and could

not reproach herself with any enlivening qualities, was equally unable to account for her pupil's contented demeanour. At length the jealous husband commanded her to conceal herself in his wife's apartment during his absence, to watch indefatigably, and to report whatever she should discover. His orders were punctually obeyed, and the result was a full confirmation of all his suspicions. He now exerted himself in devising the means of vengeance. He secretly prepared and placed before the fatal window a sort of trap composed of well-sharpened steel arrows, and, rising long before day, set off on his usual occupation. The old lady, after carefully shutting the doors after him, returned to her bed to sleep till day-break; and his wife, awakened at this unusual hour, could not refrain from uttering an ardent wish for the company of her dear Muldumarec. Her faithful prince was instantly at her side; but he had received his death wound, and she found herself sprinkled with his blood. Overpowered by fear and surprise, she could scarcely hear him say that he died for her, and that his prophecy was accomplished. She fainted in his arms; but he conjured her to preserve her life, and announced to her that she was pregnant with a son, whom she must call Ywonec, and who was destined to be the avenger of both his

parents. He then hastily departed through an open and unguarded window. His mistress, though in her shift, uttering a piteous scream, threw herself out of the same window, and pursued his flight by the trace of his blood, which the first beams of morning enabled her to distinguish. At length she arrived at a thick wood, where she was soon surrounded with darkness; but she pursued the beaten track, and emerged into a meadow; where recovering the trace of the blood, she pursued it to a large city of unexampled magnificence, which she entered, and proceeded to the palace. No one was visible in the streets. In the first apartment she found a knight asleep. She knew him not, and passed on to the next, where she found a second knight equally unknown to her. She entered the third room; and on a bed which almost dazzled her by the splendour of its ornaments, and which was surrounded by numerous torches blazing in golden candlesticks, recognised her dear Muldumarec, and sunk almost lifeless with fatigue and terror by his side. Though very near to his last moments, he was still able to comfort and instruct her. He adjured her to return instantly, while she could escape the notice of his subjects, to whom, as their story was known, she would be particularly obnoxious. He gave her a ring, in virtue of which he assured

her that she would in future escape the persecution and even the jealousy of her husband. He then put into her hands his sword, with directions that it should never be touched by man till his son should be dubbed a knight; when it must be delivered to him with due solemnity, near the tomb of his father, at the moment when he should learn the secret of his birth, and the miseries produced by it to his parents. She would then see the first use to which her boy would put it. The prince had now nearly spent his last breath in the service of his beloved mistress; he could only instruct her by signs to put on a magnificent robe which lay near him, and to hasten her departure. She staggered through the town, arrived in the solitary fields, heard the distant knell which announced her lover's death, and sunk exhausted to the ground. At length the air revived her; she slowly renewed her journey, and returned to her castle, which, by virtue of her ring, she entered undisturbed. Till the birth of her son, and from that time to the conclusion of his education, she lived in silent anguish, and in the patient expectation of the day of vengeance. The young Ywonec, by his beauty and address, recalled to her mind the loved image of his father; and at length she beheld him, with a throbbing heart, invested amidst the applause of all

the spectators with the dignity of knighthood. The hour of retribution was now fast approaching. At the feast of St. Aaron, in the same year, the baron was summoned with his family to Caerleon, where the festival was held with great solemnity. In the course of their journey they stopped for the night in a spacious abbey, where they were received with the greatest hospitality. The good abbot, for the purpose of detaining his guests during another day, exhibited to them the whole of the apartments, the dormitory, the refectory, and the chapter-house, in which they beheld a vast sepulchral monument, covered with a superb pall, fringed with gold, and surrounded by twenty waxen tapers in golden candlesticks, while a vast silver censer, constantly burning, filled the air with fumes of incense. The guests naturally inquired concerning the name and quality of the person who reposed in that splendid tomb; and were told that he was the late king of that country; the best, the handsomest, the wisest, the most courteous and liberal of mankind; that he was treacherously slain at Caerwent, for his love to the lady of that castle; that since his death his subjects had respected his dying injunctions, and reserved the crown for a son whose arrival they still expected with much anxiety. On hearing this story the lady called aloud to Ywonec,—"Fair

son, thou hast heard how Providence hath conducted us hither. Here lies thy father, whom this old man slew with felony. I now put into thy hands the sword of thy sire; I have kept it long enough." She then proceeded to tell him the sad adventure of his birth, and, having with much difficulty concluded her recital, fell dead on the tomb of her husband. Ywonec, almost frantic with grief and horror, instantly sacrificed his hoary stepfather to the manes of his parents; and, having caused his mother to be interred with suitable honours near the body of her lover, accepted from his subjects the crown which they had reserved for the representative of a long line of royal ancestors.

No. 8. Laustic, 164 lines.

The author tells us that this lay is called in the Breton tongue Laustic*, and in "right English" the Nihtegale (nightingale). It is very well written, and contains many picturesque descriptions; besides which it breathes, throughout, that peculiar spirit of formal gallantry which prevailed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at that time was likely to insure its popularity. But the adventure it relates is as insipid as possible. In the district of St.

* Eaustic is still a nightingale in the Breton language, and l'eaustic is the French manner of speaking.

Malos is the town of Bon, which derives its name from the goodness of two knights who formerly dwelt in it. The one was married; the other was in love with his neighbour's wife, who returned his affection. The houses were so near, being only separated by a wall, that the lovers could easily, from the windows of their respective bedchambers, interchange their amorous glances; talk together without being overheard, and even toss to each other little presents and symbols of attachment. For the purpose of enjoying this amusement, the lady, during the warm nights of spring and summer, used to rise from her husband's side, and, throwing a mantle over her, repair to the window and stay there till near the dawn of day. The good man, much annoyed by this practice, roughly asked her what was the object which so constantly allured her from her bed, and was told that it was the sweet voice of the nightingale. Having heard this, he set all his servants to work; spread on every twig of his hazels and chesnut trees a quantity of birdlimé; and set throughout the orchard so many traps and springes, that the nightingale was shortly caught and delivered to him. Immediately running to his wife, and twisting the bird's neck, he tossed it into her bosom so hastily that her shift was sprinkled with the blood; adding that her enemy

was now dead, and that she might in future sleep in quiet. The lady, who it seems was not fertile in expedients, submitted to the loss of her nightly conversations, and was contented with exculpating herself towards her lover by sending him the dead bird inclosed in a bag of white satin, on which she embroidered the history of its fate; and her gallant paramour caused his mistress's present to be inclosed in a golden box, richly studded with gems, which he constantly carried about his person.

No. 9. Milun*, 536 lines.

Milun was a knight of South Wales. His strength and prowess were such that, from the first day of his reception into the order, he never met an adversary who was able to unhorse him. His reputation spread far beyond the borders of his own country, and he was known and admired in Ireland, Norway, Gothland, Loegria (England), and Albany (Scotland). At no great distance from Milun's castle dwelt an opulent baron, who had an only daughter, courteous in her manners and beautiful in her person. Hearing from all quarters the praises of the knight, she became enamoured of him, and sent a messenger to inform him that her

* Perhaps Milwr, a *warrior*.

heart was at his service if he thought it worth his acceptance. Milun, whose affections were not pre-engaged, returned an answer expressive of his gratitude, sent her his gold ring as a symbol of his inviolable constancy, and, having fixed her messenger in his interests by magnificent presents, arranged with him a secure place of meeting. Their intercourse was managed so discreetly as to excite no suspicion; but at length the young lady became pregnant, and, sending for her lover, represented to him the fatal consequences of her situation. By an antient law of the country she was subject, at her father's option, to be punished with instant death, or to be sold as a slave; and she saw no means of escaping this frightful alternative. Milun listened in silent horror, but could suggest no expedient, when his mistress's old nurse undertook to conceal the rest, if the child could be properly disposed of; and for this the young lady found a ready contrivance. She had a sister richly married in Northumberland, to whom Milun might cause the child to be conveyed, together with a letter explaining all the circumstances of its birth, and Milun's gold ring, by means of which it might in due time discover and make itself known to its parents. This arrangement was adopted, and succeeded. The young lady was safely delivered of a

boy; the ring was hung about his neck, together with a purse containing the letter; he was placed in a soft cradle, swathed in the finest linen, with an embroidered pillow under his head, and a rich coverlid edged with sable to protect him from the cold. Milun, in delivering him to his attendants, ordered that during the journey he should stop seven times in the day, for the purpose of being washed, suckled, set to sleep, and again replaced in the cradle. The nurse, and all the servants who attended him, had been selected with great care, and performed their charge with fidelity; and the Northumbrian lady assured her sister, by a letter which was brought back by the same trusty persons, that she accepted the charge with pleasure. This point being thus settled, Milun left his castle for a short time on some military business, and during his absence the young lady's father resolved to bestow her in marriage on a neighbouring baron. She was now almost reduced to despair. Her lover, to whom she was more than ever attached, was absent; she had no possible asylum against the authority of her father; to avow to her new husband what had happened was impossible, and to conceal it from him extremely difficult. But she was compelled to submit. The marriage took place; and Milun on his return was scarcely less

distressed than his mistress, till he recollected that she was still in the neighbourhood, and that he might perhaps be able to devise some means of procuring an interview. He had a favourite swan, long accustomed to feed out of his hand. Having written and sealed a letter, he tied it round the neck of the bird; and, finding that it was effectually concealed by the feathers, called to him a favourite servant, and directed him to repair to the lady's habitation, to devise some contrivance for gaining admission to her, and to deliver the swan into her own hands. The man executed his commission with great ingenuity. He represented himself to the porter of the castle as a poacher; stated that he had just caught a fine swan close to Caerleon; and that he much wished to conciliate the future intercession of the lady by presenting it to her. The porter, after some hesitation, went to explore the antichamber; and, finding in it only two knights who were intent on a game of chess, returned immediately, and conducted the man to his lady's apartment; which, on his knocking, was opened to them. Having graciously accepted the present, she was going to recommend the swan to the care of one of her valets; but the messenger observing "that this was a royal bird, who would only accept of food from her own hand," and desiring her to

caress it, she soon perceived the letter, and changed colour; but, recovering herself, dismissed the messenger with a present, and turned out her own attendants, excepting one maid, and proceeded to examine the mysterious letter. It contained the warmest protestations of her lover's unalterable attachment; expressed a hope that she might be able to point out a secure place of meeting; and showed her an easy method of continuing the correspondence. "The swan, already tame, might, by good feeding, be easily attached to her; after which, if debarred from meat during three days, he would when set at liberty take wing and return to his old master." After kissing the welcome letter till she had nearly obliterated its contents, she proceeded to put in practice her lover's injunctions; and having by stealth procured some parchment and ink, she made an equally tender reply, which, being tied round the swan's neck, was rapidly and faithfully conveyed to Milun. During twenty years the happy lovers kept up, by means of this bird, a regular correspondence, and their frequent interviews were managed with a secrecy which secured them against detection. In the mean time their son, after receiving an excellent education, had been dubbed a knight, and had learned from his aunt the name of his father, and the mystery of

his birth. Inflamed with a noble ambition, he resolved instantly to set off for foreign countries, and to surpass his sire in military glory. On the next day he communicated the project to his aunt, who did not fail to give him a number of instructions for his future conduct, which, lest he should forget them, she repeated more than once, and accompanied her admonitions with such liberal presents as would enable him to rival in splendour the richest of his competitors. He repaired to Southampton; landed at Barbefluet (Barfleur); passed into Britany; engaged, by his generosity, a numerous attendance of poor knights; eclipsed the proudest of his rivals by superior liberality; vanquished the stoutest; gained the prize in every tournament; and, though he concealed his name, was quickly known through the country by the appellation of "the knight without a peer." The fame of this youthful warrior at length reached the ears of his father. From the first moment of his bestriding a horse, that father had never encountered an equal; and as he trusted that age had added to his address more than it had yet subtracted from his vigour, he hoped to prove, by the overthrow of the peerless but unknown knight, that his high renown was owing to the absence of Milun. After this exploit he meant to go in quest

of his son, whose departure into foreign countries had been lately communicated to him; and having obtained the permission of his mistress, he embarked for Normandy, and thence proceeded into Bretagne. The tournaments did not begin till the festival of Easter; Milun, therefore, who had arrived before the end of winter, spent the interval in travelling from place to place, in exercising hospitality, and in searching out the most meritorious knights, whom he attached to himself by his liberality. At length the festival took place at Mont St. Michel, and was attended by crowds of knights, French, Flemish, Norman, and Breton, though by very few English. Milun inquired minutely into the arms and devices of the unknown knight, and had no difficulty in procuring ample information. The tournament began. The two rivals separately acquired a manifest superiority, and bore down all who opposed them; but the opinions of the assembly were divided between the two. The strength and address of the veteran appeared invincible, yet the suppleness and activity of the youth attracted still more admiration. Even Milun himself beheld him with a mixture of wonder and delight, and summoned all his skill and strength when he rode to encounter this formidable adversary. His spear was too well directed to miss its aim; but it flew

into a thousand splinters, while that of the youth remained entire, and threw him at some distance upon the ground. By the violence of the shock the ventail of his helmet was broken off, and displayed his beard and hair, which were become gray with age; when the youth, bringing him back his horse, courteously requested him to remount, expressing his regret at having by his accidental victory sullied the fame of a respectable veteran. Milun, surveying him with increased admiration, discovered on his finger, while he held the rein, his own ring, and earnestly conjured him to relate his history and the names of his parents. The youth obeyed, and was proceeding to tell all he knew, when the old knight again springing from his horse, and catching him by the skirts of his coat of mail, hailed him as his son, and received him in his arms as he dismounted to request the paternal benediction. The tournament being over, they retired together amidst the tears and applauses of the assembly, and retreated to their inn, where Milun related to his son the whole series of his adventures. The young man listened till the end with respectful attention; and then exclaimed, "In faith, fair sire, I will unite you to my mother. I will kill her present husband, and you shall marry her." This being arranged, they parted for the night. On

the next day they arrived at the sea; embarked; landed in Wales after a short and pleasant passage; and were proceeding to Milun's castle, when they were met by a messenger bearing a letter to Milun from his lady, in which she announced the death of her husband, and requested him to hasten his return. At this joyful news they hurried on to the lady's castle; and she had the satisfaction of being for ever united to her lover, at the same time that she embraced a son every way worthy of his accomplished parents. On this occasion, says the author, "*the antients* made a lay which I have here set down *in writing*, and which I always relate with fresh pleasure."

No. 10. Chaitivel, 240 lines.

This lay contains few incidents; and is rendered, by means of its strange and abrupt conclusion, almost wholly uninteresting to modern readers.—There formerly lived, at Nantes in Bretagne, a lady of such exquisite beauty that no one could behold her with impunity. All the young men of the town were rivals for her smiles; but four knights, nearly of the same age, and of equal birth and accomplishments, soon eclipsed all the rest of their competitors. Each of these four deserved, and obtained, a place in her affections; but their merits

were so equal that she was unable to make a choice. At tournaments she sent to all four some mark of distinction; a ring, a scarf, a pennant, or other ornament; and all ascribed to her, as mistress of their actions, the exploits which they had the good fortune to perform. It happened once that Nantes was appointed for the celebration of a tournament at the Easter festival. Crowds of knights assembled from France, Normandy, Flanders, Brabant, Boulogne, and Anjou. The four champions, on the eve of the festival, set out to meet the foreign knights, and proposed to just with an equal number: the offer was accepted, and the contest ended to the advantage of the town. On the following day the four young lovers still further distinguished themselves; but the spectacle at length degenerated, as was frequently the case, into a real combat, in which three out of the four were accidentally slain, and the fourth dangerously wounded. All four were brought back to the lady of their affections, who caused the three to be magnificently interred, and summoned the best physicians of the town to assist her in her attendance on the survivor. Their joint efforts were at length successful. He became convalescent, and, finding his passion revive with his returning health, daily importuned the

lady for the present of her hand, to which there now remained no other equal claimant. But she gave him to understand, that, feeling herself singular in misfortune, by having lost in one day three admirers of superior merit, she would not consent to bear to the bridal ceremony a heart which must be consumed by eternal regret; and that, as a monument of her grief, she intended to compose a lay, the title of which should be "Les quatre Dols" (The four Griefs). The lover, instead of attempting to argue her out of this resolution, only employs his eloquence in convincing her that the title of the new lay ought to be "Le Chaitivel" (The Wretch), because his rivals had found in death the end of their disappointments, while he was doomed to lead a life of constant wretchedness and privation. The lady having assented to this change of title, the story is suddenly brought to a conclusion.

No. 11. Chevrefoil, 118 lines.

Our poetess informs us that she has often *heard* this lay with infinite delight, but states at the same time that she had *seen* it in the *written* history of Tristram and Queen Ysolt. In fact, it is nothing more than a single adventure in their history, and, in its unconnected state, would be scarcely intelli-

gible to the reader, who will see it to much greater advantage in the notes to Mr. Walter Scott's highly curious edition of " Sir Tristram."

No. 12. Eliduc, 1184 lines.

This is stated to be a *very old* Breton lay. Its original title, it seems, was " Guildeluec ha Gualadun," from the names of the two heroines of the story; but it was afterwards more commonly styled the lay of Eliduc. It is, by far, the longest tale in the whole collection, and sufficiently interesting to deserve a particular description.

Eliduc was a knight of Bretagne, much admired for his military prowess, his courtesy, and his political sagacity; in consequence of which his sovereign, who loved and admired him, was in the habit of intrusting to his sole management the most important cares of government. Indeed, so great was his influence at court, that he enjoyed, almost as completely as the king himself, the privilege of the chace in the royal forests. But the favour of sovereigns is always precarious; and so adroit were the enemies of Eliduc, that he was suddenly deprived of all his honours, and even banished the country, without being able to obtain from his once indulgent master the privilege of knowing the crimes laid to his charge, or of being confronted

with his accusers. Fortunately he was in the prime of life, fond of adventure, and not of a temper to despond. He retired to his castle, convened his friends, and communicated to them the king's injustice, and his own projects; which were, to embark for England, and there to enter into the pay of the first king who might want his assistance. But he had a wife, the fair and amiable Guildeluec, whom he tenderly loved, and whom, as he was unwilling to carry her into exile, he earnestly recommended to their care and attentions. He then selected ten knights as companions of his adventure, and departed for the sea-coast, escorted by nearly all his friends and vassals, and accompanied by his wife, who was almost frantic with grief at this cruel separation, and whom he could scarcely reconcile to her fate by repeating again and again the most solemn assurances of his eternal and inviolable fidelity. At length he embarked with a fair wind, and, landing at Totness in Devonshire, proceeded towards Exeter. The king of this district had an only daughter, the heiress of his dominions; and, having refused to bestow her on a neighbouring prince, her suitor, was at that time involved in a most distressful war, and besieged in his capital. Eliduc determined to proceed no further: he sent a message to the distressed king, offering his assist-

ance, and requesting, if the proposal should be rejected, a safe-conduct through the country. The king most gladly accepted the offer, and ordered his constable to prepare a house for the reception of the welcome guests, and to issue a suitable sum of money, together with a supply of provisions for their monthly expenditure. Eliduc and his attendants were magnificently entertained. His inn was the house of the richest burgess in the town, and *the grand tapestry room** was surrendered to the knight by its proprietor. Eliduc, on his part, was equally liberal. He issued strict orders to his attendants, that, during the first forty days, none of them should accept either pay or provisions from the court; and during this time he kept, at his own expense, a table profusely served for the accommodation of such knights as were unprovided with other means of subsistence. On the third day after his arrival an alarm was spread that the enemy had again over-run the country, and might shortly be expected at the gates. Eliduc flew to arms; and, having assembled his ten knights, was soon after joined by fourteen more from the different parts of the city, who declared themselves ready to encounter, under his commands, any inequality of

* La bele chambre encurtinée
Li ad li ostes deliveré,

numbers. Eliduc praised their zeal, but observed that this intemperate valour was more fitted for the lists of a tournament than for useful service in the field; and requested that they, who knew the country, would point out some defile in which he could hope to attack the enemy on equal terms. They pointed out a hollow way in the neighbouring forest, by which the invaders usually passed and returned; and Eliduc, while hastening to the place, described to them the measures which he meant to pursue, and exhorted them to follow him with vigour. His measures were so well planned and executed, that the foe were surprised while laden with booty; and their commander, with thirty of his principal officers, was seized on his palfrey, and made prisoner almost without resistance, by this small body of five-and-twenty knights. The squires and other attendants at the same time secured a large quantity of baggage, and the troop immediately hastened their return towards the city, where however their appearance excited no small consternation. The king, having mounted to a watch tower, had descried his small garrison of knights engaged in a distant action with very superior numbers; after which, seeing a large body in full march for the city, he concluded that Eliduc had betrayed him; caused the gates to be shut, the

alarm to be sounded, and commanded the citizens to defend the walls. But being quickly undeceived, he welcomed his deliverer with transports of joy and gratitude; and, after receiving his oath of allegiance for a year, invested him with the supreme military command during that period, and assigned ample pensions to himself and all his attendants. The king's daughter, the beautiful Guilliadun, became anxious in her turn to behold the extraordinary stranger, who on the third day after his arrival had gained a most important victory, and had confirmed her father in his throne, by means of a troop of knights who scarcely appeared competent to the defence of the walls. She invited him to an audience, to which he was formally introduced by one of her chamberlains; seated him near her on a bed; and entered with him into conversation on a variety of indifferent topics. But during the discourse she could not help remarking that this consummate warrior and statesman was a young and handsome knight; and as every fresh survey of his person led her to the discovery of some additional merit, she at length found that her heart was completely engaged to him; and after sighing, and turning pale, and making many reflections on the indelicacy of avowing her passion, would probably have revealed it, if the knight had not, by respectfully taking his

leave, put an end to the interview. Eliduc, in the mean time, had not been blind to the perfections of the lovely Guilliadun. Her youth, her beauty, her simplicity and frankness of character, and, above all, those artless sighs which assured him of her affection, had made an indelible impression on his heart. At length the image of his wife, and his solemn assurances of fidelity to her, interrupted the dream of happiness in which he had involuntarily indulged: but the interruption was now become painful; and while he mentally repeated the promise of adhering to his duty, he felt that the promise was disavowed by his inclination. Guilliadun, after a sleepless night, found it impossible to keep her secret locked up in her own bosom; and, having summoned a trusty chamberlain, confided to him her sudden, and, as she thought, inexplicable passion. After a long discussion, she at length, at the suggestion of her counsellor, dispatched him to the knight with the usual salutations of courtesy, and with a present of her ring and of a rich girdle. Eliduc immediately replied by an equally courteous message; put the ring on his finger; bound the girdle round his loins; offered a rich present to the chamberlain, who declined to accept it; but avoided all discussion on the subject of his message. The impatient princess was almost driven to despair by

the report of her chamberlain, who, though convinced that Eliduc could not be insensible to the kindness of his mistress, was unable to satisfy her mind, or even his own, concerning the cause of such extreme discretion. Both, indeed, were ignorant of the conflicts by which the unhappy knight was agitated. To recall his former fondness for his wife, and to conciliate his duty and affection, was no longer possible; to betray and dishonour the amiable Guilliadun would be infamous; and to encourage her passion and his own, without being hurried too far, was extremely difficult: yet on this he ultimately resolved; and, having mounted his horse, set off for the palace under pretence of paying his court to the king, but with the real view of obtaining an interview with his daughter. Fortunately the monarch was at that moment in the apartment of the princess, to whom, while he played a game of chess with a foreign knight, he explained the moves of the game. On the entrance of Eliduc he immediately introduced him to his daughter, enjoining her to entertain and form an acquaintance with a knight who had few equals in merit; and the young lady, gladly obeying the injunction, retired with her lover to the farther end of the apartment. After a long silence, which was equally painful to both, and which each ineffec-

tually attempted more than once to interrupt, Eliduc luckily bethought himself of returning thanks for the ring and girdle, which, as he assured her, he valued far beyond all his earthly possessions. This warmth of expression encouraging the princess, she frankly proceeded to make an avowal of her passion, declaring that, if he should reject her hand, there was no other man on earth whom she would ever accept as a husband; and when he mysteriously replied that, so far as his wishes were concerned, there could be no bar to their union, but that it was his purpose after the year of service for which he was pledged to her father to return and establish himself in his own country, she told him that she had full confidence in his honour, and was persuaded that when the time arrived he would make all the proper arrangements for her future destiny. Thus ended their interview to their mutual satisfaction. Eliduc, watchful, enterprising, and indefatigable, soon recovered for her father all the provinces which had been torn from him, and insured his future tranquillity by the capture of the king his enemy; but scarcely was the war concluded when the knight received an embassy from his former master, whose ingratitude towards him had been punished by the loss of half the kingdom, and the jeopardy of the rest, adjuring him to come with all

speed to the rescue of a country which was now purged of the monsters whose false accusations had occasioned his unjust exile. Such an embassy, a few months sooner, would have been most welcome, but to part with Guilliadun now appeared to him the heaviest of misfortunes. He felt, however, that duty called him away, and he determined to obey the summons. He went to the king; read to him the letters which he had received; and earnestly requested leave to depart, though his stipulated term of service was not expired; observing at the same time that the state of his majesty's affairs no longer required his attendance, and promising that at the first appearance of difficulty he would return with a powerful body of knights to his assistance. The king, after vainly endeavouring by the most splendid offers to detain him, unwillingly consented to his departure; but to obtain the consent of Guilliadun was far more difficult. Trusting that she possessed the whole heart of her lover, and perfectly unconscious that his hand had been previously given to another, she insisted on accompanying him to his own country, and threatened to destroy herself in case of his refusal. Her remonstrances were accompanied by fainting fits, which terrified Eliduc into a solemn promise of submitting himself to her decision whatever it might be; but

he represented that, having sworn fealty to the king her father, he could not now take her with him without a breach of his oath; whereas, if she would allow him a respite till after the expiration of his term of service, he could then, without disgrace, comply with her wishes; and he promised, on the honour of a knight, that if she would fix a day he would return and carry her off. With this promise she was satisfied, and after many tears, and a mutual exchange of rings, ultimately permitted him to depart. The return of Eliduc to his country gave infinite pleasure to his friends, to the king his master, and, above all, to his excellent wife, who now hoped that she should be indemnified, by the society of her beloved husband, for her long and dreary hours of widowhood. But she beheld with surprise and consternation that he harboured some secret grief, and anxiously inquired if any thing in her conduct had given him displeasure. Eliduc assured her of the contrary, but told her in apparent confidence that he was bound by his oath to return to the king whom he had lately quitted, so soon as he should have settled the affairs of his own country; that he had much to endure, much to accomplish; and that, harassed as he was on all sides, he should never regain his former gaiety till he should have extricated himself from all his diffi-

culties. In the mean time, his mere name had inspired the enemy with alarm; his reappearance at the head of the armies brought back victory to the royal standard; he saw and seized the moment of making an advantageous peace; and, having done so, prepared for the execution of a more pleasing enterprise. Taking with him only his two nephews, a chamberlain already privy to his amour, and a trusty squire, all of whom he swore to secrecy, he embarked for Loegria; stationed his vessel at some distance from the harbour of Totness; and, landing his chamberlain alone and in disguise, sent him with secret instructions to the princess. The confident executed his commission with address; made his way unobserved to the chamber of Guilliadun, informed her of his master's arrival, and explained to her the measures which he had devised for her escape. They waited for the approach of night; when Guilliadun without any other attendant, having muffled herself in a short and warm mantle, which concealed the richness of her usual garments, followed the chamberlain out of the town to a small wood, where Eliduc, who had deferred his landing till the evening, waited to receive her. The knight instantly placing her on a horse, springing on another, and taking her rein in his hand, hurried forward to the sea, and embarked without having

excited the slightest suspicion of the enterprise, to which none were privy excepting those actually on board. Both wind and tide were favourable; they arrived near the coast of Bretagne, and were on the point of entering the harbour, when a sudden squall from the shore split their mast, rent their sail, and exposed them for some hours to the most imminent danger. All their exertions to guide the vessel being ineffectual, they had recourse to prayers, invoking St. Nicholas and St. Clement, and requesting the intercession of the blessed Virgin with her son, that they might be permitted to land in safety. The storm still continued; when one of the sailors suddenly exclaimed, "Sir knight, you carry with you the cause of our calamity. In defiance of God, of religion, of justice, and of honour, you are carrying off that lady, having already a beautiful and lawful wife in your own country. Permit us to throw your paramour into the sea, and we shall speedily find our prayers effectual." The princess was then lying, almost exhausted with fatigue, sickness, and fear, in the arms of her lover, who therefore, though bursting with rage, could only express it by execrations, which he vented as loudly as he could in the hope of drowning the hateful voice of the mariner. But the fatal assurance "that Eliduc was already married," had reached the

car and sunk deeply into the heart of Guilliadun. She fainted; and though her lover and his friends employed all the means in their power for her recovery, they were unable to produce any symptom of returning animation. A general exclamation of grief pronounced her dead; when the knight, starting from the body, seized an oar, felled at one blow the presumptuous seaman, threw him by the foot into the sea, took possession of the helm, and directed it so skilfully that the vessel soon after reached the harbour in safety. They all landed, and in a very few hours might reach the castle of Eliduc, which was not far from the coast; but where could he deposit the body of his mistress? how inter it with all the honours suitable to her rank and merit? He at length recollected that in the forest which surrounded his mansion dwelt an aged hermit, at whose cell the corpse might remain till its interment: he could then enjoy the sad pleasure of visiting daily the object of all his solicitude; and he determined to found on the spot an abbey, in which a number of monks should pray for ever for the soul of the lovely and injured Guilliadun. He then mounted his palfrey, and, carrying the body in his arms, proceeded with his attendants to the hermitage. The door was shut; and they discovered, after having at length procured an en-

trance, the grave of the holy man, who had expired a few days before. Eliduc caused a bed to be made within the chapel; and placing on it his mistress, whose deadly paleness had not yet injured her beauty, he burst into a flood of tears, kissed her lips and eyes as if in the hopes of restoring their animation, and solemnly pronounced a vow that from the date of her interment he would never more exercise the functions of a knight, but, after having erected an abbey on the spot sanctified by her remains, would himself assume the monastic habit, and daily visit her tomb to express his love, his grief, and his remorse. He then with difficulty tore himself from the body and departed; having first sent a messenger to his castle to announce that he was arrived, but so much fatigued and way-worn as to require nothing but repose and solitude. His wife met him with her usual gentleness of affection; but she instantly saw in his haggard looks that his heart laboured with some misery which her tenderness was unable to remove. His manners were such as to awaken without satisfying her curiosity. He rose at day-break, spent some hours at prayers, walked alone into the forest, proceeded instinctively to the fatal hermitage, and returned late in the evening, bearing with him, as it appeared, an increased load of misery. He saw with

astonishment that death seemed to abstain from ravaging the beauties of Guilliadun; he involuntarily gave way to the most flattering hopes; and after many long sad hours of tears and fruitless prayer retired in anguish and disappointment. On the third day he gave notice that he should go to court and pass the evening with the king. His wife, in the mean time, by the promise of the most tempting rewards, had engaged one of her pages to follow his master at a distance during his forest-walk, and to report what he should see and hear; and the page having on that morning executed his commission, she determined to take advantage of Eliduc's absence, to visit the hermitage, and to discover, if possible, the cause of that excessive grief to which he gave way, and of which the death of the old hermit, much as her husband might have loved him, was far from affording a satisfactory explanation. She set forth with the page, entered the chapel, beheld with much surprise a bed handsomely ornamented, and, on lifting up the covering, saw, with still more astonishment, the young and blooming Guilliadun, "*qui resemblot rose nuvele.*" The faultless beauty of a living rival might have excited some indignation in the bosom of the most patient wife: but the eyes of the lovely object before her appeared to be closed for ever; and Guil-

deluce could find no place in her heart for any sentiments but those of admiration and compassion. After calling her page to survey the spectacle which fully explained and excused her husband's immoderate grief, she sat down by the bed to reflect on the past, and to decide on her own future conduct. During the long absence of Eliduc she had devoted the greater part of her time to religious exercises, and she now clearly saw that to them only could she look for comfort. Having convinced herself of this necessity, she turned with tears in her eyes to the fair object of her husband's regret; when a circumstance apparently trifling involuntarily arrested her attention. A weasel, creeping from under the altar, ran upon the bed, and, passing several times over the face of the entranced Guilliadun, so far incensed the page that with a blow of his stick he laid it dead at his feet, and then threw it on the middle of the floor. The animal had lain there only a few moments, when another weasel coming from the same hole ran up to its slaughtered companion, attempted for a while to sport with it, and then, after exhibiting every appearance of grief, suddenly ran off into the wood, and returned with a flower of a beautiful vermilion colour, which she carefully inserted into the mouth of the dead animal. The effect of the application was so

sudden that the weasel instantaneously got upon its legs, and was preparing to escape; when the lady exclaimed to the page to strike again, and he aimed a second blow, which caused the creature to drop the flower, that Guildeluce instantly seized, and carefully placed between the lips of Guilliadun. The plant had not lost its efficacy. The princess, awakening from her trance, expressed her surprise at having slept so long, and then gazed with astonishment at the bed on which she lay, at the walls of the chapel by which she was surrounded, and at the two unknown figures of Guildeluce and the page, who kneeling by her side loudly expressed their thanksgivings to the Almighty for what they thought her miraculous resurrection. At length the good lady, having finished her devotions, began to question the fair stranger respecting her birth and preceding adventures, which she related with the utmost candour and exactness, till the fatal moment when the discovery of Eliduc's prior marriage had deprived her of sense and motion. The rest was better known to her hearers than to herself; and Guildeluce, more and more charmed with her innocence and frankness, after avowing herself to be her rival, lost no time in comforting her by the assurance that all her hopes and wishes might now be speedily gratified. "Your youthful beauty," said she, "might captivate any

heart, and your merit will fix for ever that of Eliduc, who is unalterably attached to you, and whose grief for your loss was such as to preclude all hope of consolation. It is my intention to take the veil, and to abandon all claim to those affections which are estranged from me for ever. In carrying you with me, and restoring you to the now wretched Eliduc, I shall promote, by the only means in my power, that happiness to which I have hitherto been the unintentional obstacle." Guilliadun consented, with silent gratitude, to accept the sacrifice so generously offered by her rival; and was united to her lover as soon as the solemn ceremony had taken place, by which Guildeluce agreed to consecrate the remainder of her days to heaven, in a nunnery which was erected and endowed by her husband, on the site of the antient hermitage. Their union was followed by many years of happiness; and they closed a life employed in constant acts of charity and benevolence, by following the pious example of Guildeluce, who received Guilliadun into her order, while Eliduc took the cowl in a monastery, to the endowment of which he dedicated the remainder of his worldly possessions. From the adventure of these three, "the olde gentil Britons" (*li auncien Bretun curteis*) formed a lay to transmit it to future ages.

Specimens

&c.

ROMANCES

RELATING TO ARTHUR.

ALTHOUGH this class of romances was formerly the most numerous, its metrical remains, excepting such as have been preserved in the form of ballads, are now extremely scanty. This indeed might have been expected; because, when all metre began to be considered as the vehicle of fiction, it was likely that the favourite story of Arthur would be the first to be turned into prose, for the purpose of establishing its authority beyond all dispute. On the other hand, as the art of reading made a slow progress amongst the vulgar, it was natural that parts of the metrical tale should be detached for their use, and, in the shape of songs, be committed to oral tradition. Mr. Warton, however, has given us an extract from the *St. Graal*, a metrical *fragment*, said to consist of 40,000 lines, composed in the reign of Henry VI. by Thomas Lonelich; and in the same reign Robert de Thornton is supposed to have written the romance of Percyvell of Galles, which is

still preserved in the library of Lincoln cathedral. Concerning the former it is difficult to feel much interest, after perusing the deplorably dull extract given by Mr. Warton; and of the second I have been unable to procure a transcript.

The tale of Merlin was perhaps at first nothing more than part of the *Brut*, as composed either by Gaimar or by Wace; in which shape it was certainly, as the French writers generally describe it, the most antient of all the romances; but the immediate original from which our English translation was made must have undergone many interpolations, because it contains a variety of fabulous matter which had not found its way into the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The following abstract was made from a transcript of the MS. No. 150, in the library of Lincoln's Inn; and some deficiencies were afterwards supplied, by the kindness of my friend Mr. Walter Scott, from the more antient and perfect copy in the Auchinleck MS. The romance of Merlin is mentioned among the contents of Bishop Percy's curious folio. See introduction to the third volume of Reliques of English Poetry.

MERLIN,

PART I.

THERE was once in Britain a king whose name was Constâns*. In his youth he had been distinguished by his wisdom and valour, having resisted, and finally driven out of his country, king Hengist of Denmark and his whole army of *Saracens*. This king had three sons, Constantine, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uther Pendragon, of whom the elder, preferring the tranquillity of a cloister to the cares of empire, had taken the cowl at Winchester, and was generally known by the name of Le Moine.

Constans being attacked by a mortal disease, and finding his death approaching, summoned his barons, thanked them for their faithful services, and earnestly requested that they would transfer to his son that allegiance which had hitherto insured the independence of their country. They consented; and immediately after the funeral, which took place at Winchester, Constantine was taken from his convent, and vested with the insignia of royalty.

* Brother of Auldran, king of Britany. For his history see the abridgment of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the third section of the Introduction.

Among those who had appeared to assent, with the greatest readiness, to the wishes of the dying monarch, was Sir Vortigern his steward; a man of some abilities, who had commanded the British armies with conduct and success; but who had long cherished the most criminal ambition, and now determined to pave his way to the crown, though at the expense of the liberties and happiness of his country. He did not long wait for an opportunity of gratifying his wishes.

Hengist had no sooner learned the death of Constans, and the nomination of his monkish successor, than he sent

> After many *Saracen** stout and stark,
> Of Saxoyne, and of Denmark,

and in a short time invaded Britain with an army of an hundred thousand men. The unwarlike Constantine immediately flew to Vortigern, and earnestly conjured him to take the command of the British forces; but the "traitour strong" pretended sickness, and declared that age and infirmities had rendered him incapable of bearing the

* This word, during the middle ages, was indiscriminately applied to Pagans and Mahometans; in short, to all nations (except the Jews) who did not profess Christianity.

fatigues of a campaign. The unfortunate Constantine, being thus left to his own resources, issued his orders, hastily assembled an army, led them as hastily against the enemy, and experienced a total and ruinous defeat.

Britain was at that time governed by a number of petty kings, whom the talents of Constans had united in a general confederacy, and who, accustomed to constant success while fighting under his banners, felt with general indignation this unexpected reverse of fortune. All concurred in attributing their defeat to the incapacity of the wretched monk whom they had so hastily invested with the sovereignty; all agreed that, after the death of Constans, Vortigern alone, the companion of his victories, was fitted to lead the British princes in battle: to Vortigern, therefore, they sent an embassy of twelve of their number, inviting him to assist them with his arm and his counsel in repairing their late disgrace.

The crafty steward received the ambassadors with every demonstration of respect, but affected the utmost surprise at the subject of their application:

Tho bespake him Fortager,
" Good knights hardy, and partener,

" I n'am neither your duke ne king!
" Why owe ye me counselling?
" King Constans I was to swore;
" Ever I was you, tho, tofore!
" And *wered** you, with my powér,
" *Wide and side*†, far and near!
" With me is it nought now so:
" Wherefore, to your king ye go,
" Beseech him he you succoúr,
" And ye will him then honoúr."
Tho bespake him a baroun,
" Sir, our king is but a *conyoun*‡!
" Tho he saw swordes draw,
" To flee soon he was well *faw*§.
" He can no counsel to no good:
" He is so adrad‖ he is nigh wood¶."—
" I *'live*** it well," quoth Fortagers,
" Will I me nothing aventúre
" To purchase a fool great honóur!
" Gif Moyne your king dead were,
" Ich would you helpen out of care."

* defended.

† far and wide.—The word *side* is nearly synonymous with *long*; side-sleeves are long sleeves.

‡ a coward. *coyon* Fr. § glad. ‖ frightened
¶ mad. ** believe.

This hint was not lost upon the ambassadors. On their return to the confederates they found the unfortunate king at dinner in his hall, and, rushing on him unexpectedly, dispersed his attendants, killed him, and cut off his head.

An act of violence so sudden and unexpected excited very general surprise and indignation; but the assassins, after effecting their purpose, had instantly made their escape. The danger of leaving the throne vacant, while Hengist was at the head of a victorious army, was evident and pressing; the infancy of Uther and Ambrosius precluded their nomination; and there remained no competitor whose military talents could be compared to those of Vortigern. This chief, therefore, was elected without opposition, and graciously accepted the command amidst the shouts of the army. After convening his parliament, his first object was to secure the guardianship of the young princes; but two faithful barons, foreseeing this design, had taken advantage of the confusion attending the murder of the late king, and had conveyed into Britany the intended victims of his ambition.

Vortigern, though much disappointed, was forced to suspend his feelings for the present, and to take such measures as might justify the choice of the nation. He assembled his army, marched against

Hengist, checked his career of victory, routed him in a general engagement, drove him from post to post, and, finally, enveloped the Saxon forces so completely, that they were glad to purchase their safety by the express stipulation that they should embark for Germany, and bind themselves to abstain from all future attempts on the territory of Britain. Vortigern returned in triumph, and held a solemn festival in honour of his victory.

On this occasion the assassins of the late king, to whom the new sovereign was indebted for his elevation, came forward to claim the reward of their action. But Vortigern, though he had approved the removal of his rival, did not wish to establish a precedent of which he might, in his turn, become the victim; he therefore ordered the immediate punishment of the claimants, whose guilt was fully established by their own confession. They were instantly drawn asunder by horses, and their mangled remains publicly hanged. Unfortunately for him the culprits were men of rank, and who had extensive and powerful connexions: their execution therefore became the signal of a general insurrection; the royal forces were repeatedly vanquished by the rebels; and Vortigern, after gaining the crown by a series of treachery, was on the point of losing it by an act of justice, when he bethought

himself of applying for assistance to Hengist. The arrival of the Saxons, who gladly obeyed the first summons, instantly turned the scale of victory; the confederate Britons fled in every encounter; and Vortigern, restored to all his power, felt the warmest gratitude for his deliverer, which was soon strengthened by another and stronger passion.

Angys had, verament,
A daughter both fair and gent;
Ac* she was heathen Sarazine:
And Fortiger, for love fine,
Her took to fere and to wife,
And was cursed in all his life!
For he let Christian wed heathen,
And meynt our blood, als flesh and *mathen*†!
Many thousand was swithe in wedlock,
Als we find written in book.
Ther was nigh all this land
To the devil gove in hand!
Feasts hi made, great and fele‡,
And hadden all worldes weal,
And held no better law
Than the hound with his feláwe!
This lasted well fele year—

* But. † maggots? A. S. and Dutch.
‡ many.

But tyrants, though they may repress, can seldom stifle the voice of conscience; and Vortigern was doomed to feel that neither the success of his arms, nor the removal of all his rivals, nor the power of his ally, could give him that security which could only result from a confidence in the affections of his people. Persecuted by continual distrust and anxiety, he determined to construct an impregnable fortress, in which he might defy all attempts of his enemies, and feel secure against the machinations of the malcontents, the possible infidelity of his allies, and the probable invasion of the young princes, Uther and Ambrosius, whose pretensions to the crown might perhaps be supported by a large army from Britany.

Having made these sage reflections, he pitched upon a proper spot, a commanding eminence on Salisbury plain, traced out the plan of the fortifications, and, having assembled fifteen thousand masons and carpenters, ordered them to proceed in the work with all possible dispatch. The order was punctually obeyed. The ground was excavated, the foundation laid, and, before the end of the day, a wall of prodigious thickness, and already breast-high, indicated the formidable extent of the future castle. But when the workmen returned on the next morning to their task, they were not a little surprised to find the ground perfectly levelled, so

that the trace of their labour was only visible from the heaps of lime and stone, the remnants of the wall, which lay on each side of the former trench. After rubbing their eyes, to satisfy themselves that they were awake, they exerted all their sagacity in attempting to penetrate the cause of this mystery; but finding that, after all their conjectures, the intended castle retained the same unpromising appearance, they began to remove the rubbish, dug the foundations anew, placed every stone with the most scrupulous care, and retired to rest, exhausted by fatigue, and at a later hour than usual, but exulting in the conviction that the mischief of the preceding night was perfectly repaired.

Their triumph was of short duration. They returned in the morning, and perceived that the wall was again obliterated. It was now hopeless to inquire whether the evil arose from the obstinate nature of the soil, or from a secret antipathy of the stone and mortar: in either case no coalition could be expected from argument; and experience had now fully proved that any attempt to reconcile them by force was no less desperate. The case therefore was referred to Vortigern, and by him to his astrologers, whom he commanded, on pain of death, to discover why his castle refused to be constructed on Salisbury plain.

The wise men, thus menaced, consulted the firmament, and discovered, by the aspect of the stars, that a boy had been born, five years before, without the intervention of man. They assured the king that, if he could discover this boy, put him to death, and besmear with his blood the foundations of his fortress, it might be erected without any further difficulty. Vortigern, though he saw no reason for doubting the efficacy of the receipt, did not implicitly believe in the existence of such a boy; he therefore dispatched a number of messengers into all parts of England in search of this prodigy, but detained the wise men in prison, assuring them that, if the child were not discovered, their blood should pay the penalty.

In this place our author, being aware that his hearers may grow impatient for the appearance of the great personage whose adventures he has undertaken to relate, leaves the wise men in their prison, and the messengers on their road, and enters upon a mystical dissertation preparatory to the birth of Merlin. He informs us, on the authority of "David the prophet, and of Moses," that the greater part of the angels who rebelled under the command of Lucifer, lost through that act their former power and beauty, and became "fiendes black;" but that some, instead of falling into "Hell-pit," had

remained in mid-air, where they still possess the faculty of assuming any shape which may tend to promote their wicked purpose of tempting and perverting mankind. They had been, as we may easily believe, much disconcerted by the miraculous birth of our Saviour; but they hoped to counteract its salutary purposes by engendering, with some virgin, a semi-dæmon * whose præternatural power should be constantly employed in the dissemination of wickedness. Such was their project. We shall now see the means to which they resorted for promoting its success, and the events which led to its final discomfiture.

There was at that time in England a rich man, blessed with an affectionate wife, a dutiful son, and three chaste and beautiful daughters. The happiness of this family was become proverbial among their neighbours; but the fiend having discovered, in the wife, an irritability of temper which had

* This idea of caco-dæmons inhabiting *the mid-air*, is evidently taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita* Merlini, where the doctrine is thus delivered by Taliessin:

Et sibi multotiens *ex aëre corpore sumpto*
Nobis apparent, et plurima sæpe sequuntur;
Quin etiam coitu mulieres aggrediuntur,
Et faciunt gravidas, generantes more profano

hitherto escaped the notice of her husband and children, he applied himself to encourage this infirmity; and with such success, that the good lady, having been betrayed into a trifling dispute with her son, suddenly burst into transports of rage; imprecated the most horrid curses on his head; and finally consigned him, with all possible solemnity, to the devil. 'The fiend lost no time in seizing his newly-acquired property, but strangled the young man in his sleep: the mother, stung with remorse, instantly hung herself; and her husband, overpowered by this sudden calamity, died of grief, without confession or absolution.'

Among the spectators of this tragedy was a neighbouring hermit, the holy Blaise, who, on considering all the circumstances of the case, plainly discovered that it was owing to the intervention of the fiend. Feeling a fatherly affection for the three orphan sisters, he exhorted them to scrutinize severely all the thoughts and actions of their past life; received their confessions; imposed on each a proper penance; gave them his holy absolution; and then retired to his cell, in the confidence of having secured them against future temptation.

Before we proceed with our story, it will be proper to mention a singular law of this country.

In all England, *tho* *, was usage,
Gif any woman did outrage,
(But gif it were in spousing)
And any man, old or ying,
Might it *wite*† of that country,
All *quick* ‡ *heo* § shoulde *dol-ven* ‖ be;
But she were *light woman told* ¶
To all that to her ask would **.

On this sanguinary law the devil founded his plan for the destruction of the two elder sisters. He repaired, in a proper disguise, to an old woman, with whose avarice and cunning he was well acquainted; and engaged her, by promises of the most extravagant reward, to attempt the seduction of the eldest sister, whom he was prevented from assailing in person by the precautions of the holy hermit. The old hag readily undertook the commission.

To the eldest sister heo said,
" Alas; my sweet dear maid,

* then. † know. ‡ alive. § she. ‖ buried.

¶ proclaimed as a prostitute to all who chose to have commerce with her.

** I know of no authority for this strange clause. That among the Britons an unmarried woman convicted of incontinence was doomed to be thrown down a precipice, and that by the Saxon law she was liable (as here stated) to be buried alive, is asserted in Jocelin's Life of St. Kentegern.

" Thou hast fair feet and hond,
" Gentil body for to *fond* *,
" White *swire* †, and long arm;
" *Ywis* ‡ it is much harm
" That thy body ne might assay
" With some young man for to play,
" That thee might find, in every case,
" Game and mirth, and great solace!"

To these solicitations the young lady unfortunately neglected to make any objection except the danger of a discovery; which being quickly overruled, she yielded to temptation, was betrayed, condemned, and buried alive. The next sister opposed still less resistance to the artifices of the fiend; but escaped the penalty of the law by readily submitting to indiscriminate prostitution.

It is evident that the holy Blaise had been too negligent of his charge; but his whole attention was roused by the arrival of the younger sister, who, falling at his feet, and reminding him of the sad fate of her father, mother and brother, proceeded to relate the public punishment of one sister and the public disgrace of the other. Blaise was filled with compassion; he felt also that his character was staked, and that he was now fairly at issue

* fondle. † neck. ‡ certainly.

and the watchful activity of the fiend; gave her his benediction, and dismissed her with the promise that he would employ all the means in his power to preserve her from the fate by which she was threatened.

From this moment her hours were solely occupied by penitence and devotion; but her pregnancy becoming manifest, she was at length seized and carried before the justice. Her protestations of innocence were, of course, disbelieved*; a jury of matrons solemnly convened on the occasion declared, on their own knowledge, that her asseverations were perfectly incompatible with the symptoms she discovered; and the justice was proceeding to pass sentence, when Blaise interposed and petitioned for a delay of her punishment. He observed that, whatever might be the guilt of the

* It may be presumed, however, from a passage in Jocelin's Life of St. Kentegern, that the British virgins were very subject to accidents, though their mental purity was not thereby impaired. The author says, "Audivimus *frequenter* sumptis transfigiis puellarem pudicitiam expuguatam esse, ipsamque defloratam corruptorem sui minime nosse. Potuit *aliquid hujusmodi* huic puellæ accidisse, &c." The birth of St. Kentegern was, in some respects, very similar to that of Merlin; and so was, according to the editor, that of St. David. Pinkerton's Vitæ antiquæ, &c. p. 200.

mother, her child was assuredly innocent, and consequently that her death must be deferred till after her delivery; that the story told by the supposed culprit was indeed very wonderful; but that he, to whom it had been solemnly revealed in confession, believed it to be true, that some mystery was concealed under it which time would probably manifest: and therefore he advised that a respite of two years should be allowed, during which the woman should be strictly confined, in the hopes of discovering the truth of her narrative. The justice yielded to this advice, and ordered her to be carefully guarded, with no companion but a midwife, in the upper room of a lofty tower, in which they received a daily supply of provisions by means of a long rope and basket.

In due time the girl was delivered of a son, whose fine features and well formed limbs excited the admiration of the midwife, though his diabolical origin was evinced by a complete covering of black hair, which she could not touch without shuddering. The pious Blaise, who had exactly calculated the time of the little dæmon's birth, was in waiting at the foot of the tower, and, being informed of the event, ordered the infant to be lowered in the basket; bore him away in triumph to the sacred font; baptized him by the name of

Merlin; and thus disappoined for ever the hopes of the fiends, at the very moment of their expected completion.

The good man then returned with his infernal proselyte, and restored him by means of the basket to the midwife; who carrying him to the fire, and surveying his rough hide with horror and astonishment, could not refrain from reproaching him for his unreasonable choice of a mother who had never taken the usual means to have a child.

" Alas," she said, " art thou Merlin?
" *Whether* * art thou? and of what kin?
" Who was thy father, by night or day,
" That no man wite ne may?
" It is great ruth, thou foul thing,
" That for thy love (by Heaven's King!)
" Thy mother shall be slain with woe!
" Alas that *staund* † it shall fall so!
" I would thou were far in the sea,
" With that thy mother might scape free!"
When that he heard her speak so,
He *brayed* ‡ up his eyen two,
And *lodly* § on her gan look,
And his head on her he shook,

* Whence. † time.
‡ raised suddenly—with a staft. Sax. § loathingly.

And gan to cry with loud din;
" Thou lyest!" he said, " old queau *!
" My mother shall no man *quell* †,
" For no thing that man may tell,
" While that I may stand or gon!
" Maugré hem every one
" I shall save her life for this.
" That thou shalt hear snd see, ywis."

Both the mother and the midwife were very near dying of fright while they listened to these encouraging assurances. They crossed themselves, and, at length resuming courage, conjured him, in the name of God and the Virgin, and of as many saints as they were able to recollect, that he would declare who he was, and what misadventure had brought him thither: but Merlin, who was not naturally loquacious, only smiled at their questions, and abstained from gratifying their curiosity. In this silence he obstinately persevered during six months, when the lamentations of his mother ex-

* A similar instance is recorded in the Life of St. Ninian: " At sanctus, silentium imperans plebi, jubet sibi puerum præsentari *non nisi unius noctis ætatem* habentem.—Ex infantili itaque corpore vox virilis insonuit; lingua incrudita rationabilia verba formavit, &c." Pinkerton's Vitæ antiquæ Sanctorum, &c. p. 10.

† kill.

torted from him a second promise of his protection; by which she was so far satisfied as to await with some degree of confidence the final decision of the justice.

The two years being expired, she appeared in court with her child in her arms; listened in silence to the interrogatories which she had formerly answered, and even abstained from protesting against the sentence which condemned her to be buried alive. But her infant, to the great surprise of all present, undertook her defence, alleging that her pregnancy was the result of a *chance* which neither man nor woman could prevent. Such an argument was certainly not convincing; and the justice, happening to feel offended by the premature eloquence of the young advocate, only replied by confirming the sentence and ordering the culprit to instant execution. But Merlin was not dismayed. He proceeded to tell that he was the son of a devil of great power, though fortunately rescued by an expeditious baptism from the vicious disposition of his paternal relations; that he could prove his præternatural descent by revealing all things past, present, or future; and that the justice was in this respect very much his inferior, as he did not even know the name of his own father. The justice, not much conciliated by this speech, answered,

" Thou liest, thou black conioun!
" My father was a good baroun,
" And my mother a levedy free:
" Yet alive thou may her see."

Merlin calmly desired that the lady might be summoned; and, on her appearance in court, being urged to state his accusation, requested that they might be confronted in private, because such a subject was not fit for public discussion. The justice, a good deal surprised at his discretion, readily consented.

" Merlin," he said, " now pray I thee,
" What was the man that begat me?"
" Sir," he said, " by St. Simoun!
" It was the parson of this town.
" He begat thee, by St. Jame!
" Upon this woman that is thy dame."
The levedy said, " Thou foul thing,
" Thou hast *lowen a stark lesing**!
" His father was a noble baroun,
" And holden a man of great renown;
" And thou a mis-begotten wretch!
" I pray to God the de'el thee fetch!
" In wild fire thou shouldest be *brent* †,
" For with wrong thou hast me *shent* ‡!"

* lyed a strong lie. † burnt. ‡ ruined.

Merlin quietly answered, that, as her memory seemed rather defective, he would willingly assist it by relating a few circumstances of her past life. He put her in mind of a certain journey to Carduel, from whence the baron returned rather unexpectedly in the night:—

" It was by night and not by day;
" The parson in thy bed lay;
" At thy chamber door thy lord gan knock;
" And thou diddest on thy smock,
" And were sore afraid that *tide* * !
" And undiddest a window wide,
" And there the parson thou out let,
" And he ran away full *sket* †.
" Dame," he said, " that *ilke* ‡ night
" Was begot thy son the knight.
" Dame," heo said, " lie I ought ?"
And heo stood still and said nought.

The justice, to whom this recital, though perfectly new, did not appear at all amusing, impatiently expected from his mother a refutation of the charge; but the lady was satisfied to purchase Merlin's silence by a candid confession. She was therefore dismissed with a severe reprimand; after

* time. † quickly, hastily. ‡ same.

which Merlin informed the justice that she was gone to the parson, who, becoming desperate at this disclosure of his sins, would immediately fly to the next bridge and drown himself in the river. The completion of this prophecy inspired the justice with great respect for the prophet, whose mother was instantly set at liberty. Five years after this, by the advice of Merlin, she assumed the veil in a convent of black nuns, and spent the remainder of her life in acts of devotion.

Merlin being now seven years old, it is time that we should return to the messengers whom we left upon their travels.

After a long and fruitless journey, three of them happened to meet in the same town; and this town was the place of Merlin's abode. He happened to be playing, at that moment, with some children in the street; and one of his companions picking a quarrel with him exclaimed—

" Thou black shrew! thou go us fro!
" Thou art a foul thing gotten amiss!
" No man wot who thy father is!
" But some devil thee begot, I ween,
" To don us both *treyghe** and *tene*†."

* treason. † mischief.

At these words the three messengers drew their swords, conceiving that they had found the appointed victim; but Merlin, after rebuking his companion for his indiscretion, ran with a smiling countenance to the messengers, welcomed them to the town, and, to their inexpressible astonishment, related to them the whole circumstances of their mission; assuring them at the same time, that Vortigern's wise men were great fools, and that all the blood in his veins would not in any way contribute to the solidity of the intended castle. The messengers, in reply, disclaimed any desire of taking his life, provided he could prevent the loss of theirs, by furnishing them with solid reasons for disobeying their orders: he therefore conducted them to his mother, from whom they learned his miraculous birth, and no less miraculous wisdom; and it was ultimately agreed that they should all return to court on the following day, the messengers on their own horses, accompanied by Merlin on a little palfrey.

The journey lasted three days; and each of these added to the admiration of the messengers for their young companion. They passed the first night in a market-town, the streets of which were crowded by merchants; and here Merlin, after a long silence, burst into a sudden and violent fit of laughter. On

being questioned about the cause of his mirth, he pointed out to the messengers a young man who was bargaining for a pair of shoes with uncommon earnestness.

Then said Merlin, "See ye nought*
"That young man, that hath shoon bought,
"And strong leather to *do hem clout* †,
"And grease to smear hem all about?
"He weeneth to live hem to wear:
"But, by my soul I dare well swear,
"His wretched life he shall *for-let* ‡,
"Ere he come to his own gate."

The event immediately followed the prediction. On the following day the mirth of the young prophet was still more violently excited by a funeral-procession, preceded by a number of clerks, and headed by a priest who chanted most loudly and melodiously; while an aged mourner, with his eyes fixed on the bier, on which was laid a boy of

* This is apparently copied from the Vita Merlini Caledonii. The Latin lines are—

Illinc progressus, nova calciamenta tenentem
Spectabat juvenem, commercantemque tacones.
Tunc iterum risit, &c.

† to make the soles. ‡ lose.

about ten years old, exhibited every token of despair and anguish. Merlin, being called upon to explain the cause of his merriment, informed his companions that the mourner and the chanter ought to change characters; since the boy, whose loss was so feelingly deplored by the reputed father, had really sprung from the loins of the lively ecclesiastic. The justness of this information was verified on the spot; and the mother of the child, being closely questioned by the messengers, confessed the truth, upon their assurance that the happiness of her good husband, who blindly confided in her chastity, should not be disturbed by a communication of the discovery.

On the third day, about noon, Merlin laughed again, though no visible object on the journey had attracted his attention; and his companions were informed, to their great surprise, that his laughter was occasioned by an event then passing at the court of Vortigern. The chamberlain of that monarch, it seems, was a woman, who for some unknown reason had assumed the dress of a man, and whose beauty had inspired the queen with a passion which she was unable to conquer. But her solicitations being, of course, ineffectual, her love was soon converted into hatred; she flew to the king, and accused the chamberlain of an attempt

to offer violence to her chastity; and the indignant monarch, without further inquiry, ordered the supposed culprit to be immediately hanged and quartered. Merlin therefore, addressing his fellow travellers, requested that one of them should instantly hasten to court; recommend an immediate examination into the sex of the pretended ravisher; and, after proving her innocence, inform Vortigern that he was indebted to Merlin for this important discovery.

His orders were punctually obeyed. One of the knights messengers, setting off at full speed, shortly arrived at court; fell on his knees before the king; informed him that the wonderful child was found; that his knowledge was indeed supernatural, and that he would arrive within a few hours: lastly, he told him that the chamberlain lately ordered for execution, as guilty of an intended rape on the queen, was in fact a woman; which might easily be verified by causing her to be examined in his majesty's presence. Vortigern issued the necessary orders, and the truth of the information became manifest; but the king, not much pleased by a discovery which pointed out his own precipitation and injustice, sternly asked the messenger, "from whom he had learned a secret so extraordinary?" He was answered, that it was discovered by Merlin;

who, though only seven years old, understood all things, and particularly what related to the refractory castle, much better than all the wise men in his majesty's dominions.

Vortigern, appeased by this answer, and full of curiosity to see his new guest, ordered out his whole court, and, springing upon his horse, rode forward to meet Merlin, whom he conducted in state to the palace, and entertained with great magnificence. On the following day he conducted the child to the site of his projected castle, and inquired why, the ground being apparently like common earth, and the materials of his edifice sufficiently solid, they were unable to stand upright in the dark, and were constantly tumbled down before morning? Merlin replied, that the accident was in appearance very perverse, but that the cause was extraordinary. That immediately below the soil were two deep pools of water; below the water two huge stones; and below the stones two enormous serpents, the one white as milk, the other red as fire; that they slept during the day, but regularly quarrelled every night; and, by their efforts to destroy each other, occasioned an earthquake, which was fatal to his intended edifice. Merlin at the same time recommended that he should take measures to verify the truth of this relation.

Accordingly Vortigern employed his fifteen thousand workmen. The water was soon discovered, and, by sinking wells, was wholly drawn out. The two stones were found at the bottom; and, being with some difficulty removed, exhibited the tremendous serpents,

With long tailis, fele fold,
And found right as Merlin told.
That one dragon was red so fire,
With bright eyen, as basin clear;
His tail was great and nothing small;
His body was a rood withal.
His shaft may no man tell;
He looked as a fiend of hell.
The white dragon lay him by,
Stern of look, and griesly.
His mouth and throat yawned wide;
The fire brast out on ilka side.
His tail was ragged as a fiend,
And, upon his tail's end,
There was yshaped a griesly head,
To fight with the dragon red.

Merlin had warned Vortigern and all the spectators that the conflict of these monsters would be very frightful; but curiosity for a time suspended

apprehension, till the serpents slowly rising from their den, and expanding their enormous folds, began the combat, when the astonished multitude attempted to fly on all sides; Merlin clapping his hands and shouting to encourage the combatants.

The red dragon, and the white,
Hard together gan they smite,
With mouth, paw, and with tail:
Between hem was full hard batail;
That the earth dinned tho,
And loathly weather wax therto.
So strong fire they casten anon,
That the plains therof shone,
And sparkled about, so bright
As doth the fire from thunder-light.
So they fought, for sooth to say,
All the long summer's day.
They ne stinted never of fighting
Till the even-song gan ring.
So in that time, as I you tell,
The red dragon, that was so fell,
Drove the white far adown,
Into the plains, a great *viroun* *,
Till they came to a valley;
There they rested hem both tway,

* circuit. *O.* Fr. from virer, to turn.

Well the mountaunce * of a while
That a man might gon a mile.
And there the white *cover'd* † his flight
And *wox* ‡ eager for to fight.
And eagerly, without fail,
The red dragon he gan assail,
And drove the red right again
Till he came into the plain.
And there the white, anon-right,
Hent § the red with all his might,
And to the ground he him cast,
And, with the fire of his blast,
Altogether brent the red,
That never of him was founden shred;
But dust upon the ground he lay! &c.

The white serpent, immediately after his victory, disappeared, and no man has since discovered the place of his retreat.

Merlin, having thus fully confirmed the truth of his assertion, desired to be confronted with the Magi; and sternly asked them why they had unjustly thirsted after his blood. They humbly re-

* amount:—the shorter phrase "mountance of a mile" is often used, and means the same thing. By a similar analogy, the word *stund*, in German, signifies an *hour* and a *league*.

† recovered. ‡ waxed; grew. § seized.

plied, that their art had certainly deceived them, but that the signs they had observed in the heavens could admit of no other interpretation; and Merlin, satisfied with their humiliation, explained to them, that the signs and characters which they had seen in the sky, were written there by his wicked father, who wished for his destruction. This point being settled, the Magi were pardoned; Merlin became the chief counsellor of Vortigern; and the castle was completed by his directions without any sinister accident.

At length it was suggested to Vortigern that the battle of the serpents, though certainly a sublime and magnificent spectacle, was not likely to have been solely intended for his amusement, but was probably the symbol of some mystery which the wisdom of Merlin would, doubtless, enable him to reveal. He was therefore sent for and questioned by the king, but continued to maintain a sullen silence till the impatient monarch insisted on receiving an answer, and threatened him with instant death as the punishment of his contumacy. The prophet answered the threat with a smile of haughty contempt:

> ..... Sir, withouten ween,
> That day shalt thou never se'en,
> Though thou take thy sword in hond,
> Me to slay, or bring in bond,

Yet may thou fail of all thy fare,
As doth the greyhound of the hare.

He then insisted that, before he began to answer, the king should find hostages for his security; nor would he open his lips till two barons of the first distinction and opulence pledged themselves by oath, on the sacred writings, to preserve him from all danger.

Merlin then began to explain the mystery of the two serpents. The red one, he observed, was emblematic of Vortigern, who had obtained the crown by the slaughter of king Moyne; the white, with its two heads, represented the two rightful heirs, Aurelius and Uther, who, confident in their own prowess and in the assistance of Britany, were preparing to attempt by force the recovery of their dominions.

" Into this castle they shall thee drive,
" With thy children, and with thy wife,
" And all that beth with thee then.
" Into the ground men shall you brenne!
" And the king Sir Aungys
" Shall be slain, and hold no price!
" His kindred, and thine also
" Shall don England mickle wo!

" Sir Fortager, this is the tokening
" Of the dragons' fighting.
" As I thee say, withouten oath,
" Thou shalt it find seker and sooth."
Still him stood Sir Fortager,
And bot his lip with dreary cheer;
And said to Merlin, " Withouten fail
" Thou must me tell some counsail,
" Withouten *chest* *, Withouten strife,
" How I may best save my life."
Then Merlin gan stand still;
And answered him with wordes *grille* †,
And said, " Sire, withouten ween,
" Thus it must needs be'en;
" And therefore, so God give me rest,
" I no ken no *rede* ‡—but do thy best!"
Fortager said, " But thou me tell,
" Anon I shall do thee quell!"
He stert up, and would have him *raught* §,
But where he was he ne wist nought.

Merlin indeed had vanished immediately after the conclusion of his speech; and, during the fruitless search of Vortigern and his courtiers,

* debate. Chaucer. † horrible. Chaucer. ‡ advice.

§ reached.

was occupied in relating to Blaise the various adventures which had befallen him since their separation. During his abode with this holy man he compiled his book of prophecies, comprising all the past and future history of his country. Posterity will long regret that this invaluable repertory is so obscure

> That few men, withouten ween,
> Can understand what it may mean.

Our author now passes to the concluding events of Vortigern's reign, which are thus introduced:

> A merry time it is in May,
> When springeth the summers day,
> And damisels carols leadeth,
> On green wood fowls *gredeth* *.
> So in that time, as ye may hear,
> Two barons came to Fortager, &c.

They brought the very unwelcome intelligence that Aurelius Ambrosius, and his brother Uther, having made good their landing, were advanced within a few miles of Winchester.—Vortigern,

* sings:—in general it expresses any cry.

without loss of time, dispatched messengers to Hengist, imploring his assistance; while other messengers were sent to Winchester with orders to provide against a surprise, and assurances that he would immediately march at the head of his whole army, and give battle to the invaders. But the tyrant's orders arrived too late. The citizens of Winchester no sooner discovered the banners of their antient sovereigns, than they resolved to open their gates, and, having overpowered the resistance of the garrison, joyfully took the oath of allegiance to the right heirs of the monarchy.

On the approach of Vortigern and Hengist, the two brothers quitted the city, and drew out their army in order of battle; but, before the conflict began, the troops of Vortigern were already thrown into confusion. Many of the British officers, indignant at being combined with the Saxons against their countrymen, positively refused to make the attack; and, being joined by their troops, boldly resisted the orders of Vortigern, and repelled the attempts of his adherents to overpower them. The news of this revolt being carried to Aurelius and Uther, they instantly seized the favourable moment; threw the allies into confusion; and soon obtained a decisive victory. The fugitives were

pursued as far as Salisbury plain, where Vortigern took refuge in his castle; but the Britons having thrown wild-fire over the walls, the whole edifice was soon involved in a general conflagration. The tyrant with his wife and child perished in the flames; and the prophecy of Merlin was thus fully accomplished.

MERLIN,

PART II.

8020 Lines.

THE following abstract is made from a transcript of the Auchinleck MS. communicated to the editor by Mr. Scott. The author has evidently intended to relieve the fatigue of his hearers during his long-winded narrative by breaking it into *fyttes* or cantos; and as the expedient appeared at least equally necessary in prose, it has been followed in this abridgment.

CANTO I.

After the death of Vortigern, Uther Pendragon marched to besiege Hengist in a castle to which he had retreated; but the efforts of the assailants being rendered abortive by the strength of the position, he was advised by five of his barons, who had witnessed the preceding feats of Merlin, to apply for the assistance of the magician. Ac-

cordingly, messengers were dispatched in search of him; and

On a day, this messager
Sette hem alle to the diner.
A beggar ther come in,
With a long berd on his chin;
A staff in his hond he hadde,
And shoone on his fete *bade**.
With his schuldres he gan *rove* †,
And *bade* ‡ "good for Godys love."
They said he scholde nought share
Bot strokes and *bismare* §.
The eld man said anon,
"Ye be *nice* ||, everych one,
"That sitten here and skorne me,
"On the king's nedes that schuld be,
"For to finde Merlin child!
"The barouns ben witless and wild,
"That senten men him to seche,
"That nought ne *couthe* ¶ knowleche!
"To day he hath yow oft met;
"No know ye him never the bet.
"*Wendeth* ** home by my *rede* ††!
"For him to find ne shal ye spede.

* perhaps *bad*; or it may be the perfect tense of the verb *abide* or *'bide*.

† shrug. ‡ prayed. § disgrace. || foolish.
¶ know no knowledge. ** go. †† advice.

" Biddeth *him* and the barouns five
" They come and speken with him *blyve**;
" And *seggeth* †, Merlin wil hem abide
" In the forest here byside."

With these words he vanished; and the messengers, as " telleth the letters black," were filled with wonder. Uther, having heard their relation, left the command of the army with his brother Aurilis Brosias (Aurelius Ambrosius), and repaired to the forest, where Merlin amused himself at his expense by assuming three several disguises: first that of a swine-herd; then that of a chapman with a pack at his back; and lastly that of a young and comely peasant,—in which shape he exhorted him to have patience, assuring him that Merlin would keep his assignation, though perhaps not till late at night. At last he arrived, announced himself as Merlin, though still in his peasant's shape, and related that by his advice Aurelius had just attacked and slain Hengist. Uther, rejoiced by this news " as the birds by the first dawn of day," returned with Merlin to the camp, and found his brother not less astonished than delighted by his victory, of which he was unable to give a very intelligible account till he learnt from Uther the name of his

* presently. † say.

powerful counsellor and assistant. At this time a message was received from the Saracens (Saxons) requesting leave to retire, with the assurance that they would never more return to infest the peace of Britain: and this proposal being by Merlin's advice accepted, and the tranquillity of the island restored by the departure of the enemy, Uther was elected sovereign, received the oath of fealty from the principal barons, and was solemnly crowned at Winchester, amidst the rejoicings of the whole nation.

Not long after this ceremony a vast army of Saracens from Denmark made an attack on Bristol. Merlin had forewarned the brothers of this invasion, and at the same time informed them that one of them was destined to fall in the dreadful conflict by which the triumph of the Britons must be purchased, but that the victim would be rewarded by the crown of martyrdom. Uther was directed to make head against the enemy on the land side, while Aurelius should attack them in the rear from the sea beach; and both exerted themselves with the most desperate valour. But Uther received from Merlin, during the engagement, a secret assurance that he was not the person destined to go immediately to heaven; and the romance tells us that he was very glad to hear it.

He redoubled his efforts to secure the victory nearly gained by Aurelius, who fell when the enemy was already thrown into confusion; and these efforts were so successful,

That of thritty thousand, and mo,
Ne let they five away go.
Of our were slawen then anon
Three thousand, and ten, and one.
Three mile wayes, other two,
Ne might no man step, ne go,
Neither on hill ne on den,
Bot he stepped on dede men.
The blode over-ran the countray,
Over alle in the vallèy.

The body of Aurelius was, on the following day, carefully sought and interred with due solemnity.

Uther reigned seven years, and, scrupulously following in all things the advice of Merlin, distinguished every year by the most brilliant achievements. He overcame king Claudas * the tyrant of Gaul, and became the suzerain of Hoel king

* This Claudas, the great enemy of Ban and Boort, makes a conspicuous figure in the romance of Sir Launcelot.

of Harman *, first husband of the beautiful Igerna, and lord of Gascony, Normandy and Boulogne, Poitou, Champagne, and Anjou. He also acquired the allegiance of Ban king of Benoit in "lesse Briteyne," and of his brother Bohort of Gannes, two of the first pillars of chivalry. Moreover he instituted the round table, under Merlin's special guidance, intended to assemble the best knights in the world. High birth, great strength activity and skill, fearless valour, and firm fidelity to their suzerain, were indispensably requisite for an admission into this order. They were bound by oath to assist each other at the hazard of their own lives; to attempt singly the most perilous adventures; to lead, when necessary, a life of monastic solitude; to fly to arms at the first summons; and never to retire from battle till they had defeated the enemy, unless when night intervened and separated the combatants.

* The country of Harman is unknown to modern geography, but appears in this place to mean Britany. The Hoel king of the country is perhaps assumed to be the father of him who is celebrated in Geoffrey of Monmouth as the great assistant of Arthur in his victories; for, as our romancer has made him the first husband of Igerna, Arthur's mother, these heroes thus become very nearly related

This table 'gan Uther the wight;
Ac it to ende had he no might.
For, theygh alle the kinges under our lord
Hadde ysitten at that bord,
Knight by knight, Ich you telle,
The table might nought ful-fille,
Till they were born that should do all
Fulfill the mervaile of the Gréal.

Happy are the kings whose ministers happen to be conjurers! Uther had the good fortune to close the list of his sanguinary conquests by the more flattering though not very honourable victory which he obtained, by the assistance of Merlin, over the beautiful Igerna, whom he enjoyed, under the shape of her husband the duke of Cornwall, in Tintagel castle. It is unnecessary to repeat from the romance the same circumstances which have been related by Geoffrey of Monmouth; but it will be proper to observe, that the subsequent union of Uther to his fair captive was accompanied by the marriages of the three daughters whom she had borne to Hoel, her first husband.

Nanters, king of Gerlot, married Blasine, the eldest, by whom he had a son named Galaas. King Lot espoused the second, named Belicent, who became the mother of Gawain, Guerehes,

Agravain, and Gaheriet. The third was united to Urien king of Scherham, whose son was the celebrated Ywain.

Merlin, it seems, had exacted from Uther, as the price of his complaisance in furthering his majesty's amours, the absolute right of directing, as he might think fit, the nurture and education of the boy who should result from them; and no sooner were the usual festivities concluded than he repaired to Uther, and reminded him of his promise. He had read in the stars that the wife of Antour, a nobleman high in Uther's esteem, would be the best possible nurse for the child; and therefore directed the king, in the first place, to obtain the consent of the intended foster-father. He then enjoined him to conceal carefully from Igerna the identity of her unknown ravisher with her present husband; and, when she should confess to him her pregnancy, that he should consent to forgive her supposed crime, only on condition that the child should be delivered to a person whom he would appoint, for the purpose of educating it in perfect obscurity. All this was punctually performed. Merlin received the child at the palace gate; conveyed him to church, where he caused him to be christened by the name of Arthur; and then bore him to Antour's wife, who undertook to

suckle him, having obtained another nurse for her own son Kay, of whom she had been recently delivered. As these secret anecdotes may require some attestation, the author assures us that "he has found them *in the black*;" and soon after appeals to the *Brount*, meaning perhaps the *Brut* or Chronicle.

Arthur grew and prospered under the care of Sir Antour—

> He was fair, and well *à gré*,
> And was a child of gret noblay.
> He was curteys, faire and gent,
> And wight, and hardi, verament.
> Curteyslich and fair he spac;
> With him was none evil lack.

But he was kept in perfect ignorance of his high birth; and Uther, though he lived many years after this, expired without revealing the secret either to Arthur or to Igerna. Merlin however, who attended him on his death-bed, assured him that his son should succeed him, and that in his reign should be fulfilled all the wonders of the San-Gréal; and with this promise the king was perfectly satisfied. He died, and was buried by bishop Brice, a personage of great sanctity and no small importance.

As soon as the obsequies of the late king were finished, a parliament was convened for the purpose of electing a successor, and was attended by all the independent lords and princes of the island. But as Uther's family was supposed to be extinct, and numerous candidates brought forward their claims to the throne, the assembly continued to deliberate during six months; at the end of which they were so divided into factions as to preclude all rational hope of accommodation. Bishop Brice, on Christmas eve, took occasion to address them; and represented, that, as no human means were likely to produce unanimity in their counsels without the special interference of heaven, it would well become them to put up their prayers, at that solemn season, for some token which should manifest the intentions of providence respecting their future sovereign. This advice was adopted; all parties prayed with the greatest fervour,—and with such success, that the service was scarcely ended when a miraculous stone was discovered before the church-door, and in the stone was firmly fixed a sword with the following words engraved on its hilt:

"Ich am y-hote Escalibore;
"Unto a king fair tresore."

(On Inglis is this writing,
" Kerve steel, and yren, and al thing.")

Bishop Brice, after exhorting the assembly to offer up their thanksgivings for this signal miracle, proposed a law, that whoever should be able to draw out that sword from the stone should be immediately acknowledged as sovereign of the Britons; and his proposal was instantly decreed by general acclamation.

King Lot, king Nanters, king Clarien, and all the principal candidates, successively put their strength to the proof; but the miraculous sword resisted all their efforts. It stood till Candlemas; it stood till Easter; it stood till Pentecost, when the best knights in the kingdom usually assembled for the annual tournament; and no one had been able to move it. In the mean time Arthur had been placed, for the purpose of finishing his education, in the service of king Lot: but when Kay was received, previously to the feast of Pentecost, into the order of knighthood, he was advised by his father to take Arthur as his squire; and the young hero accordingly attended his foster-brother, in that capacity, to the lists. Sir Kay was a youth of great valour and address, (though, as the romancer tells us, he " stammered a little,")

and, having overthrown a competent number of knights with his spear, proceeded into the medley with his sword,—which unfortunately broke in his hand,—so that he was forced to send Arthur to his mother for a new one. Arthur hastened home, but did not find the lady: he had however observed near the church a sword sticking in a stone, and on his return galloped to the place, drew it out with great ease, and, perfectly unconscious of having performed a mighty feat, delivered it to his master. Kay, who was better aware of its value, swore him to secrecy, and then, showing the weapon to his father, professed his intention of claiming the throne.

Sir Antour, who was rather incredulous, insisted that his son should repeat the feat, lest he should only cover himself with ridicule by failing in the experiment before the general assembly; and Kay, who hoped that the charm was now broken, readily replaced the sword in the stone; to which the blade instantly adhered so strongly that he was utterly unable to remove it. Somewhat abashed by this discovery of the imposture, he confessed to his father that he had received the sword from his squire; and Antour, carrying Arthur to the cathedral, intrusted him with the secret virtues of the sword, promised his best assistance in placing

him on the throne, and only requested of his foster son, in return for all his service, the promise of nominating Sir Kay to the office of high steward; a request with which Arthur joyfully complied.

Sir Antour now hastened to invest him with the order of knighthood, and equipped him with a degree of splendour suited to his high pretensions.

> First he fond him cloth and *cradel*,
> Tho he fond him stede and sadel;
> Helm, and *briny*, and *hauberjoun*,
> *Saumbers*, *quissers*, and *aketoun**,
> Quarré shield, gode swerd of steel,
> And launce stiff, biteand wel.
> There he gave him, anon-rights,
> To his service forty knights.
> A-morwe they went to tournament,
> And so there dede, verament,
> That, eche day, Sir Arthour
> The los he *bare* and the honour.

Antour then repaired to bishop Brice, to inform him that Arthur had performed the conditions pointed out by heaven; upon which the good pre-

* *Cradel*, perhaps from Cratula, a species of dress which Du Cange supposes to have been clerical—*briny*, and *hauberjoun*, different sorts of breast-plates—*saumbers*, perhaps misspelt for *vaumbras*, the covering of the arm—*quissers*, covering for the thigh—*aketoun*, a coat of mail.

late summoned the general meeting, before whom the trial of the sword was several times repeated; Arthur was unanimously proclaimed, and an early day appointed for his solemn coronation.

During the preparations for this ceremony Merlin arrived, and communicated to the bishop the whole mystery of Arthur's birth. He at the same time fore warned him that the approaching festival would not pass off without a severe contest, and the effusion of much blood; he recommended that Arthur's party should be strengthened as quickly as possible by the accession of Sir Jordain, Sir Bretel, and all the adherents of Igerna; and above all, that they should be constantly armed, and prepared for the attack of their enemies.

CANTO II.

Mirie it is in time of June,
When fenil hangeth abroad in toun;
Violet, and rose flower,
Woneth then in maiden's bower.
The sonne is hot, the day is long,
Foulis maketh miri song.
King Arthour bar coroun,
In Cardoile that noble town, &c.

Among the competitors for the crown were six kings, distinguished by superior power or by merit;

these were Lot of Lothian; Nanters of Gerlot; Urien of Reged; Carodas king of Strangore; Yder king of the Marches; and Anguisant king of Scotland. Each of these conducted a small army of adherents to Arthur's coronation; attended, in sullen silence, the religious ceremonies; listened without any symptoms of impatience to the exhortations of bishop Brice; and even condescended to partake of the venison, of the swans, peacocks, bustards, pheasants, partridges and cranes, as well as of the piment and claré, by which the mass was immediately followed. But when, at the conclusion of the feast, Arthur proceeded according to custom to confer on his guests the investiture of the great fiefs and offices of the crown, they suddenly rose with one accord, exclaimed that a mis-begotten adventurer was unfit to reign over them, and attempted to seize the king's person. Merlin, who was present, defended the legitimacy of Arthur's birth, and told, as intelligibly as the noise would permit, his whole story; but his eloquence was unavailing—

The barouns said to Merlin,
" He was found thurgh witching thine!
" Traitour," they said, " verament
" For al thine enchantement,

" No shall never no hore's *stren*
" Our king, no *heved* ben,
"Ac he shal *sterve* right anon!"—

Luckily Arthur's friends, being perfectly armed, very soon drove before them their immense crowd of enemies, and, chasing them quite out of the town, shut the gates against them. But though forced to retreat to their tents, they still threatened a speedy vengeance; and their great numbers, their valour, and the smallness of Arthur's party, which did not amount to more than 310 knights and about 3700 ill-armed infantry, seemed to promise them a certain and speedy victory. Bishop Brice however, having assembled the whole inhabitants of the town, explained to them the divine right of Arthur to the crown, as well as his hereditary claim as son to Uther; assured them of the assistance of heaven; and concluded his harangue by these energetic words:

" Ac, for he is king, and king's son,
" Y curse alle, and y *dom*,
" His enemies with Christes mouth,
" By East, by West, by North, and South!"

Merlin, on his part, was not less active. He cast, by his enchantments, a sort of magical

wild-fire into the spacious camp of the enemy, which spread a general conflagration; and, whilst they were bewildered in the smoke and almost deprived of their senses, directed a sally from the town; by which they were instantly put to flight, with the loss of 415 (our author is very exact in his numbers) of their most forward combatants.

But the panic could not last for ever. Nanters king of Gerlot at last succeeded in rallying the fugitives, of whom he collected about 10,000 in a valley, and threatened to crush at once the small army of his pursuers.

Arthur *seighe** where he cam,
A stiff launce anon he *nam* †:
His fete in the stiropes he *streight* ‡;
The stirop to-bent, the hors *aqueight* §:
The stede he smot, and he forth *slode* ‖:
Ogain the king Nanters he rode.

Arthur, as might be expected, speedily overthrew this antagonist, and afterwards king Lot; and drawing the terrible escalibore rushed into the thickest part of the press, and spread destruction round him. But being stopped by an impenetrable

* saw. † took. ‡ stretched. § shook. ‖ slid.

multitude, and assailed by the six kings at once, his horse was finally killed, and himself in imminent danger of suffocation; when he was rescued by Sir Kay, who by one thrust of his lance overthrew Anguisant and Carodas, and, assisted by Ulfin and Bretel, mounted the king on a fresh horse. But though all these knights performed prodigies of valour, they did not wholly engross the honour of the day.

Here ye shal understond,
That men o-foot, of this lond,
Helden with king Arthour,
And did him wel gret honour.
With axes, staves, and with bowe,
Did so that alle the other *flowe* *,
And this kinges flowen also.

Arthur, after a long pursuit, collected his men, bestowed on them the plunder of the enemy's camp, returned to Carlisle, and after a solemn thanksgiving, and a festival of fourteen days in honour of his victory, was advised by Merlin to march to London, and there to summon round him all the great vassals of the kingdom for the purpose of receiving their oaths of allegiance.

* fled.

At this assembly Merlin, after representing the very formidable conspiracy which was formed against Arthur, recommended that an embassy should be sent to king Ban of Benoit, and king Bohort of Gannes, two of the best knights in the world, to request their immediate presence, and that Sir Bretel and Sir Ulfin should be the bearers of the invitation. They passed the sea; found on the frontiers of France and Britany a vast wilderness, the effect of the long wars carried on by Claudas, the French tyrant, against the Bretons; and during their passage through this desolated country were attacked by seven knights, partisans of king Claudas, of whom they slew six, put the seventh to flight, executed their commission, and returned to England accompanied by Ban and Bohort, and by a third brother named Grimbaut, a clerk, only inferior to the arch-conjurer Merlin.

On their arrival they were welcomed at Portsmouth, and in all the towns from thence to London, by songs and by "hoppings" or dances:

> ..... every strete
> Was bi honged, Ich say forsoth,
> With many pall, and many cloth
> Everich man, of each *mester**
> Hem riden again with fair attire,

* trade.

In everich strete, damiseles
Carols ledden, fair and *feles**.

Arthur met them in great state, and led them to a splendid entertainment; and after dinner the royal guests were much edified by listening to a conversation between Merlin and Grimbaut, which they could not understand, concerning the "quaintise" and contrivance of the sphere, the sun, moon, stars, and other "privy works." They then, being fully satisfied by Merlin as to the validity of Arthur's title, swore fealty to him, and afterwards proceeded to a tournament; which must have been very magnificent, because the author enumerates fourteen knights whose feats of arms were particularly noticed. These were Sir Kay, Sir Lucan the butler, Sir Grifles, Sir Maruc, Sir Gumas, Sir Placides, Sir Dreins, Sir Holias, Sir Graciens, Sir Marlians, Sir Flandrius, Sir Meleard, Sir Drukius, and Sir Breoberius. These festivities being ended, Merlin at length explained to the two kings the great purposes for which he had requested their presence; the first of which was, that they should assist king Arthur in obtaining the hand of Guenever the daughter of Leodigan king of Carmalide, and that with this view they should discomfit king Rion, who, at the head of twenty

* numerous.

tributary sovereigns, was making war on the said Leodigan. The other, that they should join Arthur with a body of 25,000 men; whereby he would be enabled to overcome eleven kings and one duke who were at that moment in rebellion against him, and were actually encamped, with a vast army, in the forest of Rockingham.

Ban and Bohort readily admitted the importance of both these objects, but alleged that they were themselves in hourly danger from the enterprises of their old enemy Claudas, who was then soliciting a powerful alliance against them; and that before they could reach Britany, collect their forces, and return to Rockingham, the eleven kings would probably be masters of London. Merlin, however, was by no means discouraged by these difficulties. He promised them, on the faith of a necromancer, that they should not suffer any damage from Claudas, and that the succours which he requested from them should be ready in due time. He then conducted Sir Ulfin and a strong garrison to Rockingham castle, with instructions to guard every pass, and to prevent the passage of any spies from the enemies' forces; after which returning to London, and obtaining the rings of Ban and Bohort as symbols of the authority under which he acted, he passed *in one night* to Britany;

assembled, with the assistance of Sir Leontes and Sir Farien the lieutenants of the two kings, an army of 40,000 men; left 15,000 for the defence of the country; deposited 25,000 at Rockingham; and, appearing very unexpectedly in the presence of Arthur and his two guests, advised that the royal army should immediately begin its march.

The rebel kings, who had formed their camp in the forest of Rockingham, were ten in number: viz. Clarion king of Northumberland, Brangores king of Strangore, Cradelman of North Wales, and a certain king called Agrugines, whose dominions lay very far north, and who is usually distinguished by the title of "king of the hundred knights;" and the six who have been already enumerated. Estas or Enslaf earl of Arundel had also joined their forces, and this formidable confederacy had assembled an army of 40,000 men. They thought themselves secure of victory, because they knew that Arthur's forces amounted to no more than 15,000; and were ignorant of the large reinforcement which Merlin, by a stroke of necromancy, had so recently smuggled over from Britany. They were therefore on the point of being surprised in their camp; but Lot, having very luckily dreamed a bad dream, sent out a number of scouts, who falling in with Arthur's

army on its march, spread the alarm, and gave time to the troops to seize their arms. Merlin however, by a new enchantment, caused all the tents to fall down at once; and the confusion thus produced forced the enemies to retreat some miles, during which they lost about one fourth of their numbers. A long and obstinate encounter then took place, in which many fell on both sides by wounds which exhibit great anatomical variety: but at length the confederated kings were totally routed; and Arthur, after bestowing the pillage of their camp on his friends Ban and Bohort, returned with them to London.

Merlin now assured him that he had nothing more to fear from the rebels; that a dreadful famine, which would speedily be felt all over the country, and the approach of new Saxon invaders, would shortly compel his rivals to court his protection; that nothing remained for him but to amass a large stock of provisions, which he must disperse amongst his fortified towns, and to put his whole army in garrisons; that he should presently receive a strong reinforcement of young and valiant knights, who would become the instruments of his future victories; and that he might now dismiss his Breton auxiliaries, reserving only their two leaders, Ban and Bohort. Finally he invited him

to a meeting, within a few days, at the town of Breckenho, between England and Carmelide, and suddenly vanished from their sight.

Arthur punctually followed the advice of his counsellor, and, having completed his preparations, repaired with his friends to Breckenho. But Merlin, though now by profession a minister of state, was always by taste a conjurer, and delighted in playing tricks upon the sovereigns whom he protected. He now met Arthur and his company in the disguise of an old "charle" (peasant) with a bow and arrows, shot in their presence a couple of wild-ducks, and, on Arthur's proposing to cheapen them, took occasion to banter him pretty severely for his avarice. Having at length made himself known, he was received with due honours, and, finding it necessary to detain the court during some weeks at Breckenho, made Arthur amends by procuring for him an interview with the fair Lyanor, daughter of a certain earl Sweyn, a damsel who had repaired to the king for the purpose of doing homage, and thus incidentally obtained the honour of giving birth to a son who was afterwards a knight of the round table. The name of this "knight of mound" is not mentioned *.

* In Malory's Mort. Arthur. he is called Borre.

CANTO III.

In time of winter *alange** it is!
The foules lesen her bliss;
The leves fallen off the tree;
Rain *alangeth* † the cuntree:
Maidens leseth her hewe;
Ac ever *hi lemeth* ‡ that be trewe!

These moral reflections are occasioned by the author's change of his subject. He now carries us to the eleven kings, who, at the moment of their greatest distress in consequence of their late defeat, received intelligence that a vast body of Saxons was landed in the country, and that their whole remaining force would probably be insufficient to make head against this new and formidable enemy. In this exigency it was proposed by Cradelman king of North Wales, that they should separate their forces; that each should collect around him a chosen body of men, and retire to the strongest posts in their respective dominions; and that, by carrying on a predatory war against the invaders, they should cut off by degrees their means of subsistence in the interior of the country. This advice was unanimously adopted; and they continued

* tedious, irksome. † renders irksome.
‡ they shine; preserve their splendour.

to defend themselves in their several capitals, (of which the names and situations are equally unintelligible,) during five years of bloody but obscure warfare; while their subjects, too much harassed to sow or gather in their harvests, were perishing in great numbers through want and misery. Cradelman himself was much infested by a wicked witch his neighbour, sister to a *soudan* called Hardogabran, a pagan conjurer. Her name was Carmile; and she was scarcely inferior, in knowledge of the black art, to the celebrated Morgain, who "beguiled the good clerk Merlin."

So general was the scene of misery, that Britain seemed to be on the verge of its total ruin: but heaven was now preparing the means of its deliverance, and a new generation was rising to repair the mischiefs produced by the rebellion of the confederate kings. Brangore had, about this time, espoused Indranes, the widow of the king of "Hungary and Blaike;" and Sagremore, her son by this foreign husband, a knight of the most undaunted valour, was preparing to come to Britain, to receive the order of knighthood from the hands of king Arthur. The same project was formed about the same time by a small band of young heroes within this island; and the author of the romance has employed the remainder of this, and the whole of the following canto, in relating their achievements.

The reader will remember that Nanters king of Gerlot had married Blasine, uterine sister to Arthur, and had by her a son named Galachin. King Lot had married Belisent, the other daughter of Ygerna, and had four sons, Wawain or Gawain, Gueheret, Gaheriet, and Agravain. Galachin, having observed that the progress of the enemy was chiefly owing to want of union among the Britons, one day inquired of his mother Blasine whether Arthur was indeed his uncle; and on being told by her that it was so, and that he could not be better employed than in producing a reconciliation between his uncle and his father, he determined to undertake the task, and to associate, if possible, his cousin Gawain in the same project. Gawain was on a hunting party when Galachin's messenger arrived; and, returning to his mother with his three greyhounds in one hand and three *raches* in the other, was received with reproaches for the futility of his amusements.

" Thou *lesest* thy time with unright;
" Thou hast age to ben knight.
" Thou shult *leten* thy folie,
" Thy *rage* and thy *ribaudic*.
" Think on thine eme king Arthour,
" Knight that is of *mest* * valour;

* *leten*, leave. *rage*, passions. *ribaudie*, love of pleasure. *mest*, most.

" And *fond** to make good acord
" Between him and Lot thy lord!"
Ther sche told, him before,
How Arthour was bigeten and bore, &c.

Gawain excused himself by alleging his ignorance of these particulars. He redispatched the messenger of Galachin with assurances that he would shortly join him; and, finding that his three brothers were resolved on the same adventure, desired Belisent to furnish them with arms and a proper number of attendants; repaired at their head to "the fair of Brockland," the appointed place of meeting; and, embracing Galachin, joyfully associated him in the enterprise, and fixed a day for their march towards London.

CANTO IV.

Miri is th' entrée of May;
The fowles make mirie play;
Maidens singeth, and maketh play;
The time is hot, and long the day.
The jolif nightingale singeth,
In the grene mede flowers springeth.

Lot and Belisent equipped their four sons for their great expedition with the utmost magnificence;

* try.

and assembled to attend them five hundred young men, sons of earls and barons, all mounted on the best horses, with complete suits of choice armour, and all habited in the same cloth. Of this splendid troop, nine only had yet received the order of knighthood: the rest were candidates for that honour, and anxious to earn it by an early encounter with the enemy. The four princes received the parental benediction, and departed for the place of rendezvous appointed by Galachin, who met them with a similar troop of two hundred men appointed by Nanters and Blasine to attend him.

After a march of three days they arrived in the vicinity of London, where they expected to find Arthur and his court, and very unexpectedly fell in with a large convoy belonging to the enemy, consisting of 700 sumpter horses, 700 carts, and five hundred waggons, all loaded with provisions, and escorted by 3000 men.

> For the poudre of this charging
> No might man see sonne shining.

Indeed the dust was considerably increased by the number of fugitives from the whole neighbouring country, who, with shrieks which "shrilled

into the clouds," attempted to escape from their burning houses, and from the indiscriminate slaughter exercised by the spoilers. Gawain's small army afforded a retreat to these frightened peasants, and a rallying point to about 500 soldiers who were also flying before the enemy; and from these he learnt the absence of Arthur, who was then conducted by Merlin to the assistance of Leodegan; the general desolation of the country; and the necessity of a speedy effort to retrieve the affairs of the Britons. A single charge from Gawain's impetuous cavalry was sufficient to recover the convoy, which was instantly dispatched to London; and the escort, though much more numerous than the assailants, being thrown into confusion by this very unexpected attack, were so rapidly cut to pieces, that no more than twenty men were able to escape, and to carry to the neighbouring army of Saracens the news of this astonishing disaster. Their panic indeed was excusable, as they had never encountered any enemies at all comparable to these youthful heroes, and particularly to the formidable Gawain:

> For arme none, y-wrought with hond,
> Ogain his *dent* no mighte stond.

That he tok, he all *to-rof**,
So dust in wind; and aboute *drof*†!

The author here takes occasion to inform us of a circumstance, very notorious at the time of these events, and certainly no less curious than important, viz. that the strength of Gawain, though always surpassing that of common men, was subject to considerable oscillations depending on the progress of the sun. From nine in the morning till noon, his muscular powers were doubled; from thence till three o'clock in the afternoon they relapsed into their ordinary state; from three till the time of even-song they were again doubled; after which this preternatural accession of strength again subsided till day-break. The poet therefore had reason to relate with some exultation that this great victory was achieved about noon, or shortly after.

In the mean time, one half of the twenty paynims who had escaped fell in with a body of seven thousand unbelieving Irishmen, and brought them back to the attack of the five princes and of their little army. Gawain, singling out a king called Choas, who was 14 feet high, began the battle by splitting him from the crown of the head to the breast. Galachin encountered king Sanigran,

* crumbled to powder. † drove.

who was also very huge, and cut off his head. Agravain, having no kings immediately within his reach, amused himself with the necks of plebeians, which he cut through by dozens at a time, till he formed a circle of dead bodies to his satisfaction. Gaheriet was employed in the same manner, when he was called off from this vulgar prey by the desire of killing a certain king Grinbat, whom he saw in the act of overthrowing his brother Gueheret. Grinbat, who had witnessed Gaheriet's prowess, wished to decline the contest, and galloped off the field at full speed till he reached a valley, where a fresh army of 8000 paynims, conducted by the other ten fugitives, was advancing to join the battle. Here he expected to find refuge; but Gaheriet, pursuing him into the press, discharged a blow at him which cut off a quarter of his helmet, one of his cheeks, a shoulder, and an arm. The young prince now attempted, in his turn, to retreat; but though he easily cut his way through the enemy, he was closely pursued by numbers, till at length, his horse being killed under him, he was compelled to fight singly and on foot against a host of enemies.

Fortunately, one of his attendants, who had witnessed his impetuous pursuit of Grinbat, foresaw the danger, and hastened to Gawain with the

intelligence. That prince, his two brothers, and Galachin instantly flew to the rescue of Gaheriet, bore down or killed all before them, and at length found the hero on the ground, nearly exhausted by heat and fatigue, and surrounded by a crowd of vulgar enemies, who had already begun to unlace his helmet, and were preparing to cut off his head; when they were diverted from their purpose by the sudden amputation of their own. Gaheriet being now supplied with a fresh horse, the five knights made a desperate charge, cut their way out, and, though harassed in their retreat, rejoined their little army.

In the mean time, the convoy which they had intercepted and sent to London having reached that city in safety, the *constable* or mayor, whose name was Sir Do, learnt the very unequal conflict in which the young princes were engaged; and having proceeded to Algate, where he blew his horn, and thus collected the several aldermen of the city with their respective wards, amounting to 7000 men, ordered them to arm, and, leaving 2000 to guard the city, put himself at the head of 5000 and marched out to the rescue of Gawain. It was now past three o'clock; and Gawain's strength becoming doubled, he astonished friends and foes by his supernatural prowess.

In blood he stode, *ich it alowe**,
Of horse and man into the *anclowe*,
That he hadde him selve y-slawe,
Withouten slejght of his felawe†.

In this situation he saw a pagan on the point of killing his brother Agravain, and suddenly leaping two-and-twenty feet over the heads of his own assailants, clove the misbelieving wretch to the girdle, and, springing into the empty saddle, again dashed into the midst of his enemies.

The arrival of the Londoners soon decided the contest. Gimbating, one of the Saracen kings, was already slain; Medelan, his associate in the command, after felling Sir Do, was killed by Gawain; and the troops, now without a leader, fled in all directions, and were slaughtered without resistance. The princes, having thus in one day annihilated three armies of the enemy, proceeded to London, where Gawain directed Sir Do to divide the whole booty amongst the citizens, and thus added considerably to the acclamations with which they had already welcomed their noble deliverers.

* I maintain it, *avow* it to be true.

† Besides the slaughter made by his companion.

CANTO V.

March is hot, miri, and long;
Fowles singen her song;
By rainis medes greeneth;
Of every thing the hert keeneth.

Arthur departed from Breckenho and arrived at Carohaise, the capital of Carmelide, attended only by Merlin, and by 39 knights whom the magician had selected for that service. Leodegan was at that moment sitting in council with his knights of the round table, 250 in number, who had all been nominated by Uther Pendragon, and placed under the command of *Herni the rivel* and *Millot the brown*, two knights of approved valour and experience: and they were then endeavouring, but with little prospect of success, to devise means of resisting the impending attack from Ryance king of Ireland, who, with 15 tributary kings and an almost innumerable army, had nearly surrounded the city, and was preparing to assault the walls.

Merlin halted his company at the door of the council-hall, caused them to alight, and marched them in procession up to the throne, where Ban was directed to address the king in a speech which he had previously learned at Breckenho. And here

the author thinks that it will be very comfortable to his hearers to know the names of the illustrious characters who formed this procession; they are as follow:

Arthur was supported on his right by king Ban, and on his left by king Bohort; the rest followed hand in hand, but in pairs. These were, Sir Antour, Sir Ulfin, Sir Bretel, Sir Kay, Sir Lucan, Sir Do, son of the mayor of London, Sir Grifles, Sir Maroc, Sir Drians of the forest sauvage, Sir Belias of maiden castle, Sir Flandrin, Sir Lammas, Sir Amours the brown, Sir Ancales the red, Sir Bleobel, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Canode, Sir Aladan the crisp, Sir Colatides, Sir Lampades, Sir Lercas, Sir Christopher of the roche north, Sir Aigilin, Sir Calogrenand, Sir Angusale, Sir Agravel, Sir Cleodes the foundling, Sir Ginures of Lambale, Sir Kehedin, Sir Merengis, Sir Gornain, Sir Craddock, Sir Claries, Sir Bhehartis, Sir Amadan the orgulous, Sir Oroman hardy of heart, Sir Galescound, and Sir Bleheris, a godson of king Bohort. Merlin, who bore the white rod before Arthur, completed the number.

Those who may be disposed to glance their eye slightingly over this edifying catalogue should be told, that the names thus divulged to them were carefully concealed from king Leodegan; and that

Ban was only permitted to tell him, in answer to his many inquiries respecting this noble troop, that "they were strangers who came to offer him their services in his wars, but under the express condition that they should be at liberty to conceal their names and quality, until they should think proper to give him further information." These terms were thought very strange and unprecedented, but were thankfully accepted; and the strangers, after taking the usual oath to the king, retired to the lodging which Merlin had prepared for them.

A few days after this, the enemy, regardless of a truce into which they had entered with Leodegan, suddenly issued from their camp to the number of 60,000 men; made an unexpected attempt to surprise the city; and, being disappointed, spread themselves over the country, and, after carrying off as much booty as they could collect, proceeded to put all the inhabitants to the sword. On this alarm Cleodalis, the king's steward, assembled the royal forces with all possible dispatch; these amounted to about 5000 men. The 250 knights of the round table soon joined him, and waited for the king's orders. Arthur and his companions also flew to arms; and Merlin appeared at their head, bearing a standard which excited, and not without reason, universal astonishment.

Opon the top stode a dragoun,
Swithe *griselich*, with a litel croun;
Fast him beheld alle in the town!
For the mouthe he hadde grinninge,
And the tonge *out-platting*;
That out *kest* sparkes of *fer*,
Into the skies thot flowen cler.
This dragoun hadde a longe taile,
That was *wither-hooked** sans faile.
Merlin cam to the gate,
And bade the porter him out late.

The porter, of course, refused, and requested him to await the king's orders; but Merlin, taking up the gate with all its appurtenances of locks, bolts, iron bars, &c., directed his troop to pass through; after which he, without dismounting, replaced it in perfect order, set spurs to his horse, and dashed at the head of his little troop into a body of 2000 Saracens who were leading to their camp a convoy of provisions. To discomfit these miscreants, and to retake the convoy, was the work of about twenty minutes; but on their return towards the city they met a second convoy of a thousand carts escorted by 16,000 men. The disparity of numbers being so enormous, Merlin

* *griselich*, grisly. *out-platting*, olling out. *fer*, fire. *wither-hooked*, (wickedly hooked,) probably *barbed*.

thought it worth while to cast a spell amongst the enemy, whom his troop charged with their usual gallantry, and proceeded to cut in pieces with all possible expedition. But the people in the city, who beheld this strangely unequal contest, were ashamed of leaving the small body of strangers to their fate.

Tho were up-undone the gate;
Cleodalis rode out therat.
The steward, with five thousinde,
Opon the paynims gun to wende.
There was din! there was cry!
Many shaft broken, sikerly.
For, in the coming of Cleodalis,
The payens *might sen**, y wis.
There was swiche contek and wonder,
That it dinned so the thunder.

Leodegan, at the same time, charged at the head of two thousand picked men, and of fifty knights of his round table, and the remaining 200 knights formed a third separate division of his small army. But the Saracens, having at length united all their forces, were enabled to oppose to each of these divisions a prodigious superiority. The knights of the round table, unable to bear up

* might see: i. e. they recovered their sight.

against the multitude of their opponents, made a desperate stand under the city walls; and while Cleodalis with the assistance of Arthur and his companions was gaining some slight advantages, the division commanded by the king in person was completely surrounded, and the monarch himself borne down and carried off by the enemy. Five hundred picked knights were chosen to conduct him to the camp of Ryance, whilst his attendants, though fighting with desperation, were unable to effect his rescue.

His dochter stode on the city wall,
And beheld this misaventure all.
Her hondes she set on her hair,
And her fair tresses all to-tare.
She her to-tare to her smok,
And on the wal her heved gan knok,
And swooned oft, and said, Allas!

But Merlin, aware of what passed in every part of the field, suddenly collected his knights, led them out of the battle, intercepted the passage of the five hundred who had conveyed away Leodegan, and, charging them with irresistible impetuosity, soon cut in pieces or dispersed the whole escort. The strokes of Arthur, Ban, Bohort, &c. fell "like hail on the shingles;" and Merlin having

now near five hundred vacant horses, and as many suits of excellent armour, at his disposal, hastily equipped the king, and, leaving Cleodalis to fight as well as he could, returned at full speed to the city walls, and fell "like a northern tempest" on the rear of the victorious Saracens.

The knights of the round table were, by this time, almost all unhorsed; but the very welcome sight of Merlin's fiery dragon, and the joyful shouts from the walls which hailed the unexpected return of their captive monarch, inspired them with fresh courage, and spread alarm through the ranks of the Saracens. The terrible "*forty-two*" overcame, like a torrent, all opposition; and the boldest leaders of the Paynims, in attempting to check its progress, successively met their destruction. Caulang, a giant fifteen feet high, encountered Arthur: and the fair Guenever, who already began to feel a strong attachment to the handsome stranger, trembled for the issue of the contest; when the British monarch, dealing a dreadful blow on the shoulder of the monster, divided him to the navel so accurately, that the two sides hung down on opposite sides of his horse, and he was thus carried about the field to the great horror of the Saracens. Guenever could not refrain from expressing aloud her wish, that the gentle bachelor who carved giants

so dexterously were destined to become her husband; and the wish was re-echoed by her attendants. King Ban dispatched a second giant in a nearly similar manner; and Bohort meeting a third, who was standard-bearer to the army, cut away his shoulder, arm, and banner; after which the enemy began to fly with precipitation, and were closely pursued by Leodegan and his attendants.

But the Saracens had still in the field two large armies; one commanded by a king called Saphiran, who was opposed to Cleodalis, consisting of about 14,000 men; and a second, led by a certain king Sornegrex, amounting to 8000, including the fugitives who had rallied round him. Merlin led his forty-two against the latter, and was shortly joined by the 250 knights of the round table, who had now supplied themselves with fresh horses; but as the heathens made a stout resistance, he directed his followers to turn their whole efforts against ten giant-champions on whom the Saracens placed their principal reliance. These, with Sornegrex at their head, being soon dispatched, the christian knights quickly spread destruction through the rest, and drove them like straw before the wind. Yet even this victory was inefficient, because the beaten army took refuge with that of Saphiran, who by dint of numbers had already driven Cleo-

dalis under the walls of the city, and began to anticipate the total destruction of the christian forces.

Merlin, though aware that no time was to be lost, ordered his knights to alight for a few moments, to relieve their horses, and then led them to this fresh contest. Cleodalis, who had exhausted all the arts of a commander, was almost in despair, when he was cheered by a general shout from the walls, announcing the rapid approach of the fire-casting dragon, of Leodegan, and of the knights of the round table. The first charge of the forty-two was, as usual, irresistible; but Saphiran, who far surpassed all the Saracen kings in skill and valour, summoning round him his best knights, made a desperate attack upon these new assailants, and had the honour of breaking into this hitherto untouched phalanx, and of unhorsing many of Arthur's bravest champions. He then again returned, broke into them a second time, bore Leodegan to the ground, slew his horse, and was only prevented from killing him by the timely interposition of Arthur, who vented his rage in imprecations of vengeance against the infidel; while Merlin, boiling with impatience, exclaimed,

"What abidest thou? coward king!
"The paien give anon meeting!"

Arthur, stung with this unexpected reproach, flew to meet Saphiran, whose spear was so strong and well directed that it pierced his shield and hauberk, and wounded him in the side; but his lance at the same time passed through the body of Saphiran.

Quath Arthur, "Thou hethen cokein,
"Wende to the devil Apolin!"
The payen fel dede to ground;
His soul *laught** hell-hound!

Ban, who on this occasion had first trembled for the days of his friend; Bohort, Kay, and the other worthies, now exerted themselves so well that the remaining leaders of the Saracens were soon dispatched; and the victory was so complete, that only 500 survivors of this terrible day were able to reach the camp of Ryance.

The immense booty gained from the heathens was, by the king's order, presented to Arthur, who divided the whole amongst the subjects of Leodegan, having first particularly enriched the host with whom he had hitherto lodged, and whose house he now left for apartments at the palace. He was disarmed, and conducted to the bath by the princess Guenever, while his friends were attended

* caught.

by the other ladies of the court. Amongst these was a second Guenever, an illegitimate daughter of Leodegan, and so nearly resembling the princess that it was difficult to distinguish them. Her mother, a lady of exquisite beauty and maid of honour to the queen, had been married to Cleodalis, but, during his absence on some embassy, had resumed her functions, and habitually slept in the royal apartment. The queen, a woman of exemplary devotion, constantly rose to attend matins; and the amorous monarch had contrived on these occasions to indemnify himself for her absence, and to share the bed of her attendant; whom, after the birth of a little Guenever, he secreted from her husband, and whom he continued to reserve as an occasional substitute for his devout consort, without exciting, as it should seem, any violent indignation in the tranquil Cleodalis.

The knights were now conducted to a magnificent entertainment, at which they were diligently served by the same fair attendants. Leodegan, more and more anxious to know the name and quality of his generous deliverers, and occasionally forming a secret wish that the chief of his guests might be captivated by the charms of his daughter, appeared silent and pensive, and was scarcely roused from his reverie by the banters of his cour-

tiers. Arthur, having had sufficient opportunities of explaining to Guenever, with that obscurity and circumlocution which a growing passion always inspires, his great esteem for her merit, was in the joy of his heart; and was still more delighted on learning from Merlin the late exploits of Sir Gawain in Britain; by means of which his immediate return to his dominions was rendered unnecessary, and he was left at liberty to follow those propensities which led him to protract his stay at the court of Leodegan.

CANTO VI.

Listeneth now, fele and few;
In May the sunne felleth dew;
The day is miri, and draweth along;
The lark arereth her song;
To meed goth the damisele,
And faire flowers gadreth fele.

The poet now proceeds to describe the miseries to which the confederate kings in opposition to Arthur were exposed by the Saracen or Saxon invasion; but, unluckily, his geography is so very confused, that it is impossible to understand the

position of the various battles which he paints with great minuteness.

Cradelman, king of North Wales, was first alarmed for the safety of his dominions, by the information that the enemy had landed in great force on both sides of Arundel, a city which, according to this romance, was not in Sussex but in Cornwall. Cradelman, taking with him ten thousand men, one half of which he confided to the command of his steward Polydamas, attacked the pagans during the night, completely surprised them, and made a great slaughter; but the fugitives, having escaped to the neighbouring territories of Carmile, brought back a most powerful reinforcement, by which Cradelman was in his turn very nearly overpowered; but was finally rescued from destruction by a well directed sally of the garrison of Arundel, and by the assistance of the king of the hundred knights, who had accidentally heard the news of the invasion. The spoils of the enemy's camp were carried in triumph into Arundel.

About the same time,

> Ther comen up, fer on north,
> Ten riche *soudans* of grete worth;

and these soudans, whose ames are carefully enumerated, directed their forces, amounting to a mil-

lion and a half of men, against Anguisant king of Scotland. Anguisant was then in his city of Comanges, and, hearing that the whole plain country was occupied by the infidels, hastily levied a body of 15,000 men, and riding to an eminence beheld the extensive desolation of his territories.

His men there he *shift a-two*;
Half he toke himself, and mo,
And *halvendel* he tok Gaudin,
That was knight hardi and fin,
That sithen, of his mighty hand,
Wan that maiden of the douke Brauland.

This little army performed prodigies of valour, but were finally overpowered by the enormous superiority of numbers. Leaving 9000 of his followers on the field, Anguisant with great difficulty led back the remaining six to his fortified city; nor could he have effected this retreat but for the timely assistance of Urien, who, accompanied by his nephew Baldemagus, fell upon the rear of the Saracens with a body of 12,000 picked soldiers.

Ther was mani heved off *weved*,
And many to the middle cleved;

And mani of his horse *y-lust*;
For sothe, there ros so michel dust,
That of the sunne, schene and bright,
No man might have no sight.
Here and there cri, and *honteye* * !
Men might hem heren thre mile way !

The approach of night separated the combatants. Urien, on his return, unexpectedly fell upon a valuable convoy of the enemy, escorted by about 8000 men, who were then unarmed and at table. He charged them, cut the escort to pieces without opposition, and carried off the convoy.

While this was passing in the north, Sagremor, who had embarked at Constantinople for the purpose of receiving the order of knighthood from king Arthur, arrived in Sussex with seven hundred noble companions who were ambitious of the same honour. They found the whole country over-run by a Saracen-army under the command of king Oriens; but, having collected about 500 adventurers whom they blended with their little troop, determined, with more boldness than wisdom, to cut their way through these infidels. They had scarcely formed this resolution, when an *old churl*, accosting Gawain, who was still in London, in-

* confusion.

formed him that Sagremor was on the point of being surrounded and killed; urged him to hasten, with such forces as he could raise, to his assistance; and promised to conduct him by a very short route to the place of combat. To confirm his intelligence, he presented some letters apparently written by Sagremor; and Gawain was almost immediately ready to depart at the head of 15,000 citizens, who were joined on the march by numbers of volunteers, whilst the old churl conducted them without the least interruption, through roads unknown to the enemy, till they reached the field of battle.

Sagremor and his companions had successfully cut their way through some twenty thousands of miscreants, but at last found themselves, by repeated exertions of almost miraculous valour, hemmed in on all sides by the innumerable host of their assailants. They were then reduced to despair, and almost on the point of throwing down their arms, when their spirits were restored by the unexpected appearance of Gawain and his brethren, who joined them at the first charge, after killing or oversetting sixteen thousand infidels. Then

> Mani mouthe the gras *bot**,
> And *griselich yened* †; God it wot!

* bit. † yawned frightfully.

Payens floated in her blod!
Ever is Christis mighte good.

Gawain, having luckily encountered king Oriens, gave him a blow on his helmet which threw him to the ground in a swoon, and was preparing to pursue his victory; when an unknown knight, suddenly accosting him in an imperious tone, ordered him to sound a retreat, and to lead his army to Camalot. Gawain obeyed, and had conducted his troops about a mile; when Oriens, recovering from his trance, called for a fresh horse and a new suit of armour, and galloped at the head of 60,000 cavaliers to intercept the Christians. The result however was, that he was thrown into a second swoon by a blow from the sword of Gawain; and though the hardness of his skull and helmet resisted this repetition of the experiment, a considerable number of his best generals were slain around him by Gaheriet, Agravain, Galachin, Gueheres and Sagremor; and the Christians made good their retreat within the walls of Camalot, where the arrival of Sagremor was celebrated by all kinds of rejoicing.

Oriens, whose bruises did not tend to soften the ferocity of his temper, finding that it was hopeless to attempt the siege of Camalot, led his army into the territory of Caubernic, belonging to

Estas duke of Arundel, spoiled the whole country, and carried his ravages into the *adjoining* states belonging to king Clarion. Estas repaired to this monarch for the purpose of consulting him on the means of resisting, or at least of harassing, their inexorable enemy; and after a long discussion, which it is not worth while to repeat, they agreed to take post, with as many troops as they could levy, in the great forest of Rockingham, and there to watch an opportunity of taking their revenge on the Saracens.

CANTO VII.

In May is miri time swithe;
Foules in wode hem maken blithe;
In every lond *arist* * song;
Jesus Christ be ous among.

The business of this short canto is not very interesting. The combined troops of duke Estas and of king Clarion, having chosen a station in the forest where seven roads met, soon discovered a convoy—

* arises.

Full of ich maner prey;
Of venisoun, and flesch. and brede,
Of brown ale, and win white and rede
Of baudekins, and purple pall,
Of gold and silver, and cendal:

and suddenly attacking the escort of 5000 horsemen, put them all to the sword, and seized the convoy, which they lodged in safety within the walls of Arundel. In returning from this capture, they had an encounter with 15,000 Saracens, whom they also attacked and dispersed, after killing two or three giants who commanded them: but foreseeing that the enemy would be constantly strengthened by fresh reinforcements, they prudently secured their means of retreat into the forest. Oriens, on hearing of their success, became, as usual, very ferocious.

"Ah Mahoun!" said Oriens, "tho
"Thou n' art a god worth a sloe!
"Therefore the folk thou dost no gode,
"So for Christen doth her Gode!"

He then ordered forty thousand men to surround and destroy these insolent Christians; but they had already taken their measures, and, under cover of

the forest and of the night, retired with little loss to their several fastnesses.

CANTO VIII.

Mirie it is in somer's tide;
Foules sing in forest wide;
Swaines gin on justing ride;
Maidens liffen hem in pride.

We have seen, that though Arthur had carried with him, to the assistance of Leodegan, the flower of British chivalry, a new race of heroes had since started up for the defence of the country. Gawain, his cousin Galachin, and his three brothers, together with Sagremor, already ranked with the most experienced commanders; and a new champion, the celebrated Ywain, was soon added to the number. It will be remembered that Urien

Hadde spoused Hermesent,
Blasine sister and Belisent.
Thai had a yong man hem bitwen,
Michel Ywain, a noble *stren* *.
He was ycleped michel Ywain,
For he hadde a brother knight, certain,
Bast Ywain he was yhote,
For he was bigeten *abast* †, God it wote.

* child. † in bastardy.

Urien, by another quen,
Yet hadde bigeten a gentil stren,
That was hoten Morganor;
A gode knight by Godis *ore**.
He hadde made him in al heir
To the lond that of him com, *veir*†.
The lond that com of Hermesent
Was Ywain's, thurgh right descent.

Mickle Ywain made the same request to Hermesent which Galachin and Gawain had addressed to Blasine and Belisent, and was, like them, strongly encouraged to forward a reconciliation between Arthur and his father Urien. Hermesent provided for him a hundred knights, and three hundred young bachelors, candidates, like himself, for the order of knighthood, with a proper supply of horses and armour; and Ywain, having received the maternal benediction, departed with his bastard brother, and began his march "all by the forest of Bedingham, toward Arundel, in Cornwall."

His road lay through the territories of king Yder; but they were at that time over-run by innumerable swarms of Saracens; and their ravages were so extensive that the report of them reached the ears of Gawain, who immediately marched to the re-

* mercy. † truly.

scue of Yder at the head of 30,000 men; and, passing from London through Carduel, arrived at Bedingham about the time when Ywain quitted it on his way to Arundel. Yder himself at the same moment resolved on trying the fate of a battle with the enemy; and, putting himself at the head of 15,000 men, was accidentally encountered by the rear guard of the great Saracen army. Yder, though he perceived the superior numbers of the heathen forces, attacked them without hesitation, broke them, and was making a dreadful carnage of the unbelievers,—when he was suddenly attacked by another division of their army, and owed his escape, together with that of a few attendants, to an unexpected diversion produced by Ywain, who issuing from the forest, and seeing the whole open country covered with enemies, instantly attacked the first who came in his way.

Ywain and his bastard brother were accompanied by a knight of great courage and experience named Ates, who quickly discovered, that, having passed a bridge, the only one which was to be found between Arundel and the forest which they had left, and this bridge having been immediately occupied by the Saracens, they had no longer any possibility of retreat. But the young bachelors made no reflections. By a desperate charge these four hundred

destroyed 5000 infidels; and, finding themselves still "whole and sound," began to anticipate a splendid and complete victory.

At this time a *little knave* delivered to Gawain a letter, which he professed to bring from Ywain; and he, having perused it, immediately called to arms, and, dividing a part of his troops into five bodies of 3000 each, gave the command of them to Sagremor, Galachin, and his three brothers, taking to himself the conduct of the rear guard consisting of 8000.

The knave taught her way sikérlich,
Thai riden wel *sertelich**;
Ther gilt pensel, with the wind
Mirie ratled, of cendal ynde.
The stedes, so noble and so wight,
Lopen and neighed with the knight.
These beth alle so fast coming;
The *children*, that whiles, wer fighting, &c.

But to fight against such superiority of numbers as then assailed them was nearly hopeless, because they were gradually encompassed and attacked in every direction. Ywain now felt the consequences of the mistake which the more prudent Ates had discovered long before; and, in the hope of re-

* closely; *serré* Fr.

medying it, proposed that they should unite all their efforts in one direction; make a violent charge towards the river; and, if it should prove fordable, retreat through it into the forest. But they were disappointed. The high banks of the river prevented all hope of escape, and beyond it they discovered fresh swarms of the enemy hastening towards the bridge. At this moment of desperation they beheld Agravain, who led the van of Gawain's forces, advancing rapidly to their assistance. They now again turned their horses, and, making a second effort, cut their way through the infidels, and joined their friends. The battle, being constantly supplied with fresh combatants by the successive succours of Gueheret, Galheriet, Galachin, Sagremor, and Gawain, who were opposed by new reinforcements which arrived in the heathen army, was continued with great obstinacy; and our poet, who is never tired of describing such scenes, has painted every circumstance of the combat with the minuteness of an eye-witness, and with a degree of delight and satisfaction in which the modern reader would not easily participate. Suffice it to say, that, the sun approaching the meridian, Gawain's strength became double; and that of Ywain and the other christian heroes being little diminished, they made as extensive a carnage

amongst the infidels as the worst enemy of paganism could conscientiously wish to contemplate, and then marched in triumph and loaded with spoil to their former quarters at Bedingham.

Here Gawain was much surprised to learn that the letters "written in Latin," which had brought him so opportunely to the assistance of Ywain, were counterfeits. The reader is probably aware that the "little knave" who brought these letters, the "old churl" who had announced the danger of Sagremor, and the unknown knight who advised the timely retreat into Arundel, were the same person; and that Merlin, under these and similar disguises, superintended all the enterprises of the British heroes during the absence of Arthur. After refreshing themselves during a few days at Bedingham, they were again summoned in great haste to Arundel.

Kaydestran and Kehedin, two noble young bachelors, with twenty-seven companions, arriving within sight of the walls, fell in with a party of the enemy, whom they instantly overthrew; but, being at length surrounded by greater numbers, and in imminent danger of being captured, were rescued by a sally of three hundred young men from the garrison of the city. The leaders of this little band were *Ywain with the white hand*. *Ywain of Lyones*,

Ywain de la vis le bel, Ywain of Strangore, and *Dedivel the savage;* all bachelors of approved courage, and all related to the family of Gawain. But before they could make good their retreat the whole were enveloped. At this instant Gawain arrived, and of course vanquished the infidels, rescued the christian warriors, and was preparing to pursue the enemy, when Merlin, in the shape of an old knight, ordered him to enter Arundel with his young kinsmen, and there to wait for further instructions.

The infidels finding that the Britons could not be attacked with advantage in that part of the country, suddenly united all their forces, and marching northwards poured into Lothian, the territory of king Lot. That monarch, advancing against them with twenty thousand men, gained a great and bloody victory; but, having pursued his advantage too far, was totally defeated in his turn by a fresh army, and forced to take refuge, with only three thousand of his followers, in the city of Dorkeine. In this extremity he resolved, by the advice of his council, to make his way to the strong citadel of Glocedoine; to deposit there his wife Belisent and his infant son Modred, and to wait a more favourable opportunity of recovering his dominions.

Gawain was perfectly unconscious of the deplorable situation of his father, and was carelessly leaning with his companions on the walls of Arundel, when a strange knight, accoutred at all points, called to him precipitately to arm, and offered to conduct him to a scene where his assistance was wanted at that moment. Neither Gawain nor any of his companions knew Merlin in this disguise; but, having exacted from him an oath that his tale was strictly true, they hastily collected their forces, put themselves under his guidance, and galloped off in search of this unknown adventure.

In passing through a forest they met a knight coming towards them at full speed, and bearing in his arms a child, whom Gawain at once recognised as his brother Modred. The knight informed them that Lot, having been surprised during his march, was severely wounded, and perhaps killed or taken; that Belisent was in the hands of the enemy at a very small distance; and that he, having with difficulty rescued the infant, was attempting to bear him to some place of safety. Gawain ordered the knight to follow his troops, and, keeping them concealed in the forest, cautiously proceeded towards the field of battle; where he soon discovered the infidel king, named Taurus, who, having seized

a lady by the tresses of her hair, was endeavouring thus to draw her up and to fix her on his horse. This was Belisent. Her piteous cries for mercy reached the ears and thrilled the heart of Gawain, but, being mixed with invocations of the holy Virgin, drew down repeated buffets from the fist of the ruffian who held her. She fell from the horse's back; but Taurus still sustained her by the hair, scourged her, and bade her follow on foot; and when from weakness she entangled her feet in her long robes, and fell to the ground, he dismounted, tied her tresses to his horse's tail, and thus prepared to ride off with his mangled victim. But an attendant, seeing the rapid approach of Gawain, suddenly cut the lady's hair, and disengaged his master from this encumbrance.

Wawain with spors his stede smot,
And he forth sterte, God it wot.
He gred aloud to king Taurous,
"Abide! thou thief malicious!
"Biche-son! thou drawest amiss!
"Thou shalt abeye it ywiss!"

Accordingly, though Taurus was of the same gigantic dimensions with the rest of the infidel chiefs, Gawain passed his spear through his shield,

hauberk and heart, and threw him dead amongst his troops, who were speedily exterminated to a man. Belisent, who had fallen into a swoon, was not a little surprised, on first opening her eyes, to find herself attended by her four sons; and her wonder and joy were complete, when, having expressed her fears for the infant Modred, the child was restored to her in health and safety. She then related that Lot, with only three hundred knights, had been attacked by many thousands of the enemy; that after a long and desperate resistance he had seen her torn from him by the miscreant Taurus; and had only consulted his own safety by flight, when, his attendants being nearly all killed, and himself wounded in fifteen places, he could no longer hope to render her any assistance.

Belisent was now placed on a litter; and, being supplied with all possible conveniences from the sumpter carts of Taurus, six hundred in number, which attended her march, was conveyed by easy journeys to London, where she was received by the gallant Sir Do, and lodged with proper magnificence in the royal palace.

All these events, it is to be observed, were dictated by Merlin himself to his old master Blaise,—so that their veracity is unquestionable; and we must now follow Merlin to the court of Leodegan,

where he related them to Arthur and his companions. He then condescended to inform the king, that the motive of their visit to his court had been to procure a suitable wife for their gallant leader; upon which Leodegan, going in search of Guenever, presented her to Arthur, telling him that, whatever might be his rank, his merit was sufficient to entitle him to the possession of the heiress of Carmelide. Arthur having accepted the lady with the utmost gratitude, Merlin then proceeded to satisfy the king respecting the rank of his son-in-law; upon which Leodegan, with the knights of the round table and his other barons, proceeded to do homage to their legitimate suzerain, the successor of Uther Pendragon. The beauteous Guenever was then solemnly betrothed to Arthur; and a magnificent festival was proclaimed, which lasted seven days, and would have been protracted much longer, but that, fresh succours having arrived in the camp of Ryance, it became necessary to prepare for military operations.

Mirie is Jûne that scheweth flower;
The meden ben of swete odour;
Lily and rose of swete odour;
The river clear withouten sour;
This damiseles love par amour.

The whole of this canto, though it extends to no less than 1100 verses, is dedicated to the description of a single battle, which ended in the final discomfiture of king Ryance, and thereby left Arthur at liberty to accomplish the great adventures to which he was destined. The troops o Leodegan were marshalled by the particular advice of Merlin: but we cannot discover any advantages which resulted from the scientific distribution recommended by the magician; the ultimate success being solely owing to the efforts of individual valour.

It was a Monday, festival of Pentecost, that had been previously chosen for this great contest. The christian knights rose at day-break, and arrayed themselves in their most sumptuous suits of armour, which were ornamented with gold, silver, and jewels. Arthur, always eager for battle, was now doubly so, because he was to be armed by the

hands of the beauteous Guenever; but, as the pieces which composed this iron dress were very numerous, and as the lady, on lacing on each, was required to pay a kiss as the forfeit of her awkwardness, or to receive one as the reward of her dexterity, the length of the ceremony excited the impatience of Merlin, who sternly enjoined the young warrior to remember these kisses in the hour of distress and difficulty.

The main body of the army was divided by Merlin into seven parts of 7000 men each. Of the first he took the personal direction, and in this body were comprehended the formidable *forty-two*, and the two hundred and fifty knights of the round table; its number being completed by a selection from the bravest of Leodegan's vassals. The commanders of the other six divisions were Gogenar, Leodegan's nephew; Elmadas; Belich le blond; Yder of north-land; Kandon, nephew of Cleodalis; and Gempore molé; and besides these, a small but choice army of reserve, consisting of 10,000 men, was led by Leodegan in person, assisted by his good steward Cleodalis.

Merlin harangued the army, and promised them final success, notwithstanding the almost innumerable forces of the enemy, whom he proposed to surprise in their camp. This camp, it seems, was

fortified on three sides; on the south by a rampart of waggons and carts, and on the west and east by a wall: "but," said Merlin, "we shall attack them on the eastern side,

"And find hem sleepand, and sle downright,
"For thai wer al dronken tonight."

He then detached ten knights, with orders to destroy all the scouts who might give information of his approach; and, having unfurled his banner surmounted by the fiery dragon, advanced in silence to the camp, which he entered unperceived.

His first operation was to cast a spell into the air, by virtue of which great numbers of the tents fell down on the heads of the sleeping infidels; and it may be presumed, that those who were very drunk were irrecoverably stifled. Those who were more watchful or alert were punished for their sobriety by being trampled in their shirts under the horses' feet, or pierced by the lances of the assailants. Several thousands were thus slaughtered before a man in the camp had time to put on his armour. But at length a few knights appeared round the tent of king Ryance; these were followed by more; and, their numbers continually in-

creasing, they were enabled to face the christians, and began "one of the greatest battles that ever was smitten."

Passed was the day-springing,
The hot sunne was schining,
Tho began knightes riding,
Trumpes beting, tabours dassing,
Ther was fleing and withstonding,
Tiring, togging, and overthrowing!

Among the knights who distinguished themselves in this terrible day was one whom the author is particularly desirous to recommend to the grateful remembrance of his hearers. This was Nacien, a knight of great prowess and merit, and allied to many of the most renowned heroes of chivalry. His mother was Hamignes, sister to Joseph a *knight of grace*, through whom he was cousin to the noble Pertival *. His father was Ebron, who had sixteen more sons, all knights of great virtue; and through him Nacien was cousin to Celidoine the rich, son of Nacien of Betica, which Celidoine first saw all the mervail of the San Gréal. Nacien was also *sib-be* (i. e. related) to king Pelles of Listoneis,

* Probably it should be Perceval.

And sith then hadde Launcelot
In his ward almost a yer,
So THE ROMAUNS SEYTH ELLES WHERE*:
This Naciens, of whom y write,
Sith then bicom eremite;
And lette knightschippe and al thing,
And bicome preste, messe to sing.
Virgin of his bodi he was,
Whom sith then the holi Godes grace
Ravist into the thridde heven,
Where he herde angels' steven;
And seighe Fader, Son, and holi ghost,
In on substaunce, in on acost.
This gave sith then the riche conseil
To the king Arthour, saunfaile,
Tho he was in gret peril
To lese his londes, and ben exil,
Ogaines the king Galahos,
The geauntes sone, of gret los,
That gaf king Arthour batailing, &c.

Nacien was accompanied by Adregain the brown; and these two had the honour of accompanying Arthur in a desperate attack on the standard of king Ryance, which represented four elephants with

* All this information, as well as that which is alluded to in the subsequent passage in Italics, is now lost.

their castles. About this time the conflict became general all over the field; and the author has exhausted his powers of description in painting the horrors of the scene.

Al so thick the arwe schoten,
In sunne-beam so doth the moten.
Gavelokes * al so thick flowe
So gnattes, *ichil abowe* †.
Ther was so michel dust rising
That sene ther n'as sunne schining.
The trumping and the tabouring
Did togeder the knights fling.
The knights broken her speren;
On thre ‡ thai smiten and to-teren.
Knightes and stedes ther laien about,
The hevedes off smiten, the guttes out.
Heveden, and fete, and armes, there
Lay strewed everich where
Under stedes' fete, so thick
In crowe's nest so doth the stick.
Sum sterven, and sum gras *gnowe* §;
The gode steden her guttes drewe,

* javelins. † I will avow or maintain.

‡ In three different directions—or perhaps *thre* is from *threa*, vindicta, Sax.

§ gnawed.

With blodi sadels in that pres.
Of swiche batáile was no *ses**,
To the night fram a morwe.
It was a batáile of gret sorowe!

The main body of the christian army, being overpowered by superior numbers, were at length driven in confusion under the walls of Denebleise; but again rallying drove back their pursuers, and gave time to the knights of Arthur's company to refresh themselves, and to relieve their horses, who were incapable of carrying, during many hours, the enormous weight of iron which covered their riders. Merlin then, having at leisure taken his survey of the field, ordered his company to mount, and led them at full speed to the part of the battle where he discovered the "crowns and beards," which were painted on the shield of king Ryance.

Arthur, glad of encountering the Irish monarch, made a violent blow at him, which cut off a quarter of his helmet, divided his shield, and, falling on his shoulder, would have slit him to the middle, had not the sword been stopped by the toughness of a serpent's skin which he wore over his shirt. He fell to the ground: and though he was speedily

* cessation.

replaced on his horse; though Arthur himself was overthrown and unhorsed by the crowd of giants who pressed forward to rescue their leader; the attack had been so well directed that the great standard was taken, the infidels who guarded it dispersed in all directions, and Ryance at length, after an obstinate conflict, was obliged to fly before the victorious Arthur, who, singling him out from his companions, pursued him incessantly, and at length overtook him when on the point of joining another division of his army. At this second encounter Ryance received a dangerous and painful wound in the side, and dropped his excellent sword called Marandoise, which became the prey of Arthur.

As Escalibore was certainly the best sword in the world, Arthur seems to have had little occasion for Marandoise: but there is perhaps a pleasure in cutting off infidel heads with an infidel weapon; and in this pleasure Arthur indulged so long as his horse was able to carry him. In the mean time, Merlin had pursued a party of the flying enemy to a considerable distance, and had cast an enchantment on them, by means of which they mistook a valley which lay before them for a deep and spacious lake, into which they declined to venture—

> Hereafter sone, in this write,
> Why he it did ye shal it wite.

But unfortunately this important piece of information is lost to posterity, because the whole remainder of the poem, as it now exists, is employed in describing the confused scene of slaughter which followed the wound and flight of king Ryance.

The number of the infidels was still so great, and the field of battle so extensive, that no eye but that of a conjurer was capable of comprehending the whole scene; and Merlin alone was aware, that whilst the army of Leodegan was beginning to triumph in all quarters, the monarch himself was in the greatest jeopardy. Being accidentally separated from his body of knights, and attended only by his faithful steward Cleodalis, he had been suddenly attacked by a large troop of the enemy, and had seen his good steward unhorsed at the first onset. A dreadful blow from Colocaulucon, *a huge man*, brought the king also to the ground, and with such violence, that it was long before he began to exhibit any signs of life. Cleodalis however, who was already on his feet, bestrode the body of his master, and, wielding his sword on all sides, manfully repelled the crowd of assailants till the king recovered his senses. Leodegan now recollected what the reader will perhaps have forgotten; viz. that he was then living in adultery with the

beautiful wife of this good steward, and, kneeling before him, humbly implored his forgiveness in a long oration, concluding with

"Forgive me now my trespas
"That I thee have done, alas!
"I pray thee, that never this misdede
"My soul into helle lede!"

Cleodalis, of course, forgave him as fast as he could, not only because he wished to waive a disagreeable subject, but because, as he properly observed to his master, their joint efforts were at this moment very necessary to preserve them both from being killed or captured. In fact, they were alternately felled to the ground so often, that their strength was at last completely exhausted; and they were on the point of being carried off by the enemy, when Merlin, who probably knew exactly their powers of endurance, and had been unwilling to interrupt the very edifying scene of their reconciliation, arrived with his knights, mounted them both on fresh horses, and in an instant destroyed their pertinactous assailants. Arthur, Bap, Bohart, Nacien, and their companions, who by Merlin's directions had taken time to rest themselves and their horses, now dispersed themselves over

the field, and cut to pieces all the infidel leaders who fell in their way:

> The other paiens flowen swithe,
> And our went again, bilive,
> Into the cité of Carohaise;
> With her feren hem made at aise;
> They maden grete bliss and fest,
> And after, yeden hem to rest.

Thus ends this fragment of more than 10,000 lines; the transcriber, as it should seem, thinking that he also had a right to rest from his labour, which he had not the courage to resume. The remainder of the column was occupied by part of another romance, which, as Mr. Scott informs us, is totally effaced.

MORTE ARTHUR.

About 3850 lines.

THIS romance was never printed, but exists in MS. in the Harleian library. (MS. 2252.) The late Mr. Ritson was of opinion that it was versified from the prose work of the same name, written by Malory, and printed by Caxton; in proof of which, he contended that the style is marked by an evident affectation of antiquity. But in truth it differs most essentially from Malory's work, which was a mere compilation; whilst it follows, with tolerable exactness, the French romance of Lancelot; and its phraseology, which perfectly resembles that of Chester, and other authors of the 15th century, betrays no marks of affectation.

As this romance contains only the concluding scenes of the life of Arthur, and as Sir Lancelot, the hero of the piece, has not been introduced, in the preceding fragment, to the reader's acquaintance, it may be proper in this place to give a short sketch of his antecedent history.

King Ban, whose acts of prowess we have so often witnessed, having returned in his old age to Britany, was again attacked by his inveterate enemy Claudas; and after a long war saw himself reduced to the possession of a single fortress, the impregnable castle of Trible, where he was besieged by the enemy. In this extremity, he determined to solicit the assistance of Arthur, and escaped in a dark night with his infant son Lancelot and his queen Helen, leaving the castle of Trible in the hands of his seneschal, who immediately betrayed the place to Claudas. The flames of his burning citadel reached the eyes of the unfortunate monarch during his flight, and he expired with grief. The wretched Helen, abandoning for a moment the care of her infant son, flew to the assistance of her husband, and, returning after the fruitless attempt to restore his life, discovered the little Lancelot in the arms of a nymph, who on her approach suddenly sprung with the child into a deep lake, and instantly disappeared. This nymph was the beautiful Vivian, the mistress of the enchanter Merlin, who thought fit to undertake the education of the infant hero at her court, which was situated within this imaginary lake; and hence her pupil was afterwards distinguished by the name of Lancelot du Lac.

The queen, after this double loss, retired to a convent, where she was soon joined by the widow of Bohort; for this good king, on learning the death of his brother, died also of grief, leaving two infant sons, Lyonel and Bohort; who having been for some time secreted by a faithful knight, named Farien, from the fury of Claudas, were afterwards carried off by the lady of the lake, and educated in company with their cousin Lancelot.

The fairy, when her pupil had attained the age of 18, conveyed him to the court of Arthur, for the purpose of demanding his admission to the honour of knighthood; and at the first appearance of the youthful candidate, the graces of his person, which were not inferior to his courage and activity, made an instantaneous and indelible impression on the heart of Guenever, while her charms inspired him with an equally ardent and constant passion. The amours of these lovers throw a very singular colouring over the whole history of Arthur. It is for the sake of Guenever that the amorous Lancelot achieves the conquest of Northumberland; that he defeats Gallehaut king of the marches, who afterwards becomes his secret and most attached confident; that he cleaves down numberless giants, and lays whole cargoes of tributary crowns at the

feel of his suzerain, finding, in his stolen interviews with the queen, an ample indemnification for his various hardships and labours. But this is not all. Arthur, deceived by the artifices of the false Guenever, who was, as we have seen, the illegitimate daughter of Leodegan, declares her the partner of his throne, and dismisses his queen to a distant province; where she is immediately joined by her lover, and follows without restraint the natural bent of her inclinations. Yet Lancelot is dissatisfied; it is necessary to the dignity of his mistress, that she should still share the bed of Arthur, and that, protected in her reputation by the sword of her lover, she should lead a life of ceremonious and splendid adultery. This point is accomplished, and their intercourse continues as usual. The prose romance of Lancelot is apparently composed of shreds and patches, and is too long for abridgment; but there is a metrical romance respecting this hero, composed by Chretien de Troyes in the 12th century, and called "La Charette," which has the air of being translated from a Breton lay, and seems to possess considerable merit. It is analysed in the Bibliothèque des Romans (April 1777) from a MS. belonging to the Comte de Caylus; but such readers as have not an opportunity of consulting that work may perhaps

be glad to find here an abridged paraphrase of this antient and curious poem.

At a festival of the Ascension, while Arthur, surrounded by his knights, was still at table, an unknown knight completely armed, and having his vizor lowered so as to conceal his features, entered the hall, and requested a boon from the king and queen; which they inconsiderately granted. Then assuming a sterner tone, he said, "Sir king, I have in my prisons many dames and damsels of thy court, whom I will keep in thy despite, unless thou find a knight hardy enough to attempt their deliverance by justing with me. I will wait in the adjoining wood. Should I be unhorsed, I promise to deliver all my prisoners; but I require that thy queen accompany thy champion,—so that, if victorious, I may carry both together into captivity."

Sir Kay the seneschal, constantly eager for adventures, which as constantly brought him to disgrace, immediately claimed this also; and Arthur, blinded by his indignation, accepted the offer, observing that the *felon*-knight did not deserve a nobler adversary. The other tauntingly replied, that a short time would show whether he deserved such a reproachful appellation; that he should expect to meet Sir Kay with no other company than that of the queen; but that half an hour would

decide their contest,—after which he should be ready to meet a new combatant.

The tone in which these words were pronounced somewhat disconcerted Sir Kay, and alarmed Arthur, who having passed his word could no longer recede. Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, boiling with impatience, armed themselves, leaped upon their horses, counted every minute as it passed, and at the expiration of the half-hour galloped at full speed to the field of battle, which was not more than a thousand paces distant from the hall. They arrived, however, too late. Sir Kay had been unhorsed, dreadfully bruised, bound hand and foot, and carried off together with the queen; but as there were two roads which proceeded from the place of combat, it was impossible to guess which they had followed. Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain therefore separated. The former, urging his horse to its utmost speed, and hoping at every instant to gain sight of the fugitives, met with a deep rut, in which his courser fell and broke his leg. The knight, almost frantic with rage, proceeded on foot with as much speed as his heavy armour would permit, and at length overtook a cart driven by a very deformed dwarf; who, on being questioned concerning the route of the fugitives, professed to have seen them, and promised,

if the hero would mount his cart, that he would soon put him into the proper road.

It seems that carts were at this time extremely scarce. One was thought sufficient for a moderate town; because they were only used for the purpose of carrying out filth, or of conveying criminals to the place of execution. Lancelot was perhaps ignorant of this, or perhaps indifferent about the mode of conveyance, provided he had a chance of overtaking his mistress: he therefore placed himself as commodiously as he could in this uncouth equipage, and only lamented that after much jolting he made little progress. In the mean time, the road which Gawain followed had insensibly led him into that of Lancelot. He met the dwarf; to whom, without noticing his friend, he put the same questions, and received the same answer: but being on horseback, he, of course, declined the proposition; and, having then recognised the other knight, strongly but ineffectually represened to him the indecorum of such a mode of travelling.

At night-fall they arrived at a castle, the lady of which immediately came out at the head of her damsels to welcome Sir Gawain, but was with difficulty induced to admit within her walls his companion, whom she supposed to be a criminal, or at least a prisoner. At supper, Sir Lancelot was

on the point of being consigned to the kitchen, and only admitted to the lady's table at the earnest solicitation of Sir Gawain. But no entreaties could persuade the damsels to prepare a bed for the reputed felon. He seized the first which he found unoccupied, and slept quietly till morning.

The windows of the castle commanded an extensive view of the country: and Lancelot, having observed at some distance on the plain a procession accompanying a lady in a veil, in whom he recognised a likeness to the fair Guenever, suddenly fell down in a swoon; an accident very usual with amorous knights, but always productive of wonder and curiosity in the by-standers. The lady of the castle imputed it to shame and vexation at the recollection of the disgraceful cart; but Gawain, on his friend's recovery, thought his suspicion very probable, and became equally eager to depart. Their fair hostess supplied Lancelot with a horse and spear; they traverse the plain at full speed; and learn from some travellers that the lady whom they had discovered was in fact the lovely Guenever; that she was led captive by Meleagans son of Brademagus king of Goire; and that there were but two roads which led to her intended prison, both of which were known to abound in the most perilous adventures. Here, therefore, the friends again

separated. Lancelot, after encountering and overcoming numerous obstacles, was accosted on the evening of the second day by a young and sportive beauty, who gaily proposed to him a supper in her castle; giving him at the same time to understand, that their repast would not be interrupted by the presence of any third person. The knight, who was hungry and weary, and whose horse was almost exhausted, accepted the proposal, though with no very good grace; supped voraciously; demanded a separate room; and, without paying any attention to some very intelligible glances, retired to rest, and slept most obstinately till his slumbers were disturbed by loud and shrill shrieks proceeding from the lady's apartment. He hastily put on his armour, and, proceeding to the place, found her struggling in the embraces of a knight, whom he instantly attacked, and would have punished for his insolence but for the interposition of six attendants, who jointly assaulted our hero and rescued the ravisher. He now turned his arms against these new enemies, cut off the hand of one, the head of another, and pierced a third through the body; but was much surprised, when, in the midst of his career, the whole scene vanished, and he found that his fair entertainer was no other than his guardian fairy, who had put him to this trial of his fidelity and courage, and

who now declared him worthy of her future protection. Lancelot again retired to rest, and on the next day the fairy condescended to conduct him into the direct road. After some hours, she led him to a fountain, where they alighted to refresh their horses; and the fairy, pointing out to Lancelot a comb of ivory inlaid with gold, and a ringlet of most beautiful hair, which lay on the grass, informed him that they belonged to his lovely queen, who had stopped there on the preceding day, and whose traces he would now find it easy to follow. Lancelot, after kissing the precious comb with great fervency, and placing the ringlet near his heart, took leave of the fairy; from whom he received, together with assurances of her further assistance, a ring, which by its changes of colour had the virtue of discovering and rendering nugatory all enchantments intended to delay his progress.

The knight pursued his journey without being much incommoded, except by the bad jokes of numerous travellers, all of whom seemed to have learned by inspiration his disgraceful airing in the cart. One, more insolent than the rest, had the audacity to interrupt him during dinner, and even to risk a battle in support of his pleasantry. Lancelot, after an easy victory, only doomed him to be carted in his turn; but, learning from a fair damsel,

his accuser, that his morality was still more execrable than his wit, provoked him to a second combat, and cut off his head; which the lady carried away with great marks of satisfaction.

At night, the hero was received in another castle with great apparent hospitality, but found himself in the morning in a dungeon and loaded with chains. Consulting his ring, and finding that this was an enchantment, he burst his chains, seized his armour in spite of the visionary monsters who attempted to defend it, broke open the gates of the tower, and continued his journey. At length his progress was checked by a wide and rapid torrent, which could only be passed by walking on the edge of a vast and sharp scimitar. Lancelot, leading his horse by the bridle, and causing him to swim by his side, advanced without hesitation upon this very inconvenient bridge, and reached the opposite bank after cutting his feet to the bone. He next, wounded as he was, attacked and killed a lion and a leopard, who opposed his landing; and then, having seated himself on the grass, was endeavouring to stop with his handkerchief the effusion of blood, which was very considerable, when he was accosted by Brademagus, father of Meleagans, whose castle was then in sight, and at no great distance. This king, not less courteous than his son was haughty

and insolent, after complimenting him on the valour and skill with which he had achieved the passage of the bridge, offered him his assistance; and, on being questioned respecting Guenever, replied that she was safe in his castle, from whence she might be rescued by any knight who should succeed in conquering Meleagans. Lancelot immediately demanded the battle for next day; and the proper preparations being made, it took place at the foot of the tower, and under the eyes of the fair captive. The contest would have been very short, had her lover retained his usual strength and activity; but, almost fainting from the anguish of his wounds and from continued loss of blood, he began to stagger and give way, when Guenever exclaimed, "Ah Lancelot, my knight! truly have I been told that thou art no longer worthy of me." The voice and presence of his mistress, and this strange reproach which he was unconscious of having merited, instantly revived the drooping knight; who, resuming at once his usual superiority, soon laid at his feet his haughty adversary, and was on the point of sacrificing him to his resentment, when Guenever, moved by the earnest entreaties of Brademagus, ordered him to withhold the blow. He did so, and even pardoned a base attempt of his prostrate enemy to stab him at the moment of his

generous forbearance. The castle and all its prisoners were now at his disposal; but he consented, at the request of Brademagus, to give his promise of meeting Meleagans at the expiration of a twelvemonth, at the court of Arthur, and of there renewing the contest for a prize which was already his own by the right of conquest.

Lancelot flew to the apartment of the queen, threw himself at her feet, and prepared to kiss her hand; when she exclaimed, "Ah Lancelot! why do I see thee again without daring to think thee worthy of me, after thou hast been disgracefully drawn about the country in ———" She had not time to finish the phrase; for her lover suddenly started from her, and, loudly lamenting that he had incurred the contempt and indignation of his lady, rushed out of the castle, threw his shield and sword to the right and left, ran furiously into the fields, and disappeared.

It seems that the story of the abominable cart, which haunted Lancelot at every step, had reached the ears of Sir Kay, who had told it to the queen as a proof that her knight must have been dishonoured. But Guenever had full leisure to repent the haste with which she had given credit to the tale. Meleagans, hearing no tidings of Lancelot, determined to keep his prisoners; and, to prevent

the escape of the queen, ordered the windows of her chamber, which was on the ground floor, to be carefully closed by a sort of wicket composed of strong bars of iron, fixed on stout iron hinges, and locked every night. In her antechamber slept her fellow-prisoner Sir Kay, and beyond him a guard of soldiers.

In the mean time, Sir Lancelot, having wandered during three days without knowing where he went, began to reflect that it might have been wiser to disabuse his mistress than to run away from her; he therefore returned by night to the tower, and, guided by a lamp in the queen's chamber, reached the grated wicket, and called in a low voice on Guenever. She was already in bed, but not asleep; and, starting at the voice of her lover, rose in her shift, which (says the poem) was "*passing white*," listened with silent pleasure to his exculpation, and, putting her hand through the bars, offered it to the lips of Lancelot as the seal of her forgiveness. The knight, in a transport of joy, seized the iron wicket, lifted it off the hinges, and, springing into the chamber, continued with the queen till day-break; when he escaped undiscovered, having carefully replaced the wicket in its former position. It happened, however, that, having scratched his leg in escaping out of the win-

dow, some blood flowed into the room; besides which, one of his gloves, which he had dropped in his hurry, remained as evidence of some nocturnal visit to the fair prisoner's chamber.

On the following day, Meleagans, coming to visit Guenever, observed this glove and the traces of blood; from which, as the wicket was apparently untouched, and as it was impossible that any one could have twice passed unobserved through a room full of guards, he naturally suspected Sir Kay of being the queen's paramour, and insisted on proving the truth of his suspicion by an appeal to arms. It was in vain that the disastrous seneschal produced his two gloves, and protested that he had neither a third hand which had been deprived of its covering, nor any wound on his person from whence the blood could have proceeded: the combat was proclaimed; and he was forced to prepare for the loss of a second battle, as he had no reason to hope for the appearance of any other champion.

Another champion however did appear, and the heart of Meleagans immediately told him that this was no other than the formidable Lancelot. His guardian fairy had restored to him his horse and arms; his recent wounds were perfectly healed; and the perjured Meleagans, covered with bruises, was again compelled, in the sight of his father and

of his subjects, to implore the mercy of his conqueror, who, at parting, had the generosity to renew the promise of meeting him at Arthur's court after the expiration of a twelvemonth. Lancelot now departed with the queen, the seneschal, and the other prisoners; and, taking the road by which they expected the arrival of Gawain, had the satisfaction of meeting him on the second day; after which, the whole company proceeded gaily towards Cardigan. But the malicious ingenuity of Meleagans was not yet exhausted. A vile little dwarf, who was stationed at the side of the road, contrived, by tearing his ugly hair and shedding torrents of tears, to interest the generous Lancelot in favour of a supposed lady, who was represented as exposed to every sort of indignity in a neighbouring castle. The incautious knight, after assuring his companions that this adventure could not last long, and that he would speedily rejoin them, consented to follow the treacherous dwarf, fell into an ambush which was prepared for him, and was plunged into a dungeon. Gawain and the queen, after waiting for him in vain during a day and a night, were obliged to resume their journey, and arrived without him at Cardigan*.

* Here ends the composition of Chrestien de Troyes; the remainder is by Geoffroy de Ligny.

After an imprisonment of six months, during which Arthur in vain attempted to gain any information concerning him, he appeared for a moment, and again as suddenly vanished, without revealing to any one the place of his habitation. The following are the circumstances of this event:—

The damsels of Arthur's court obtained his permission, and that of Guenever, to proclaim a solemn tournament, the conditions of which were, that the victor knight should have a right to select the most beautiful of them as his wife; and that her dower should be formed from the sale of the horses and arms of the vanquished. The singularity of the proposal attracted crowds of combatants, who, dividing themselves into troops, contested the prize with various success, till an unknown knight, suddenly entering the lists, attacked the rival parties in turns, and, forcing them one upon another, drove the whole before him to the extremity of the lists. Guenever, suspecting from the unparalleled address of the stranger that he could be no other than Lancelot, sent to him one of her damsels, with this message: "Sir knight, the queen orders that at the instant thou shalt suffer thyself to be conquered." In a moment he appeared awkward and irresolute; lost ground; retreated, amidst the shouts and laughter

of the spectators, to the further end of the lists; and was preparing to quit them altogether, when a second message ordered him to reassume his former superiority. He obeyed; and, turning on his pursuers with the rapidity of lightning, overthrew them all in succession, collected their horses into a body, drew them up before the queen's balcony; and, having desired that she would cause them to be sold, and distribute the purchase money among her damsels, made a low bow, and returned at full speed to his prison, leaving Guenever in the utmost astonishment at his sudden apparition.

It seems that the seneschal who had the custody of Lancelot, being obliged to leave the castle during some days, intrusted the prisoner to the care of his wife; and the wife, thinking it a great pity to detain such a handsome knight in a dungeon, gave him his liberty for a week, and even supplied him with her husband's horse and armour, on his promise to return, at the expiration of the term, to his confinement. The seneschal returning a little too soon was much alarmed at his wife's indiscretion, and hastened to impart his fears to Meleagans, who, however, laughed at his apprehensions; assuring him that the promise of Lancelot was sacred; but at the same time advised him to treat his prisoner in future with increased severity.

The barbarous order was obeyed; the knight, chained to the ground and imperfectly fed on bread and water, daily lost his health and vigour; the year was nearly expired; and all the efforts of Guenever to obtain any news of her champion having proved fruitless, the triumph of Meleagans appeared to be secure.

But at this critical moment a young and beautiful lady, surrounded by guards, and followed by a splendid retinue, arrived at the fatal castle. The seneschal recognised in her features the charming daughter of Brademagus, and sister of his master Meleagans; listened with respectful credulity to a long story respecting the motives of her journey; and submissively executed the various orders which she issued with an air of conscious authority. She slept in the castle; and next morning, complaining that her rest had been disturbed by the groans of a prisoner, directed that he should be instantly released; received him with the most marked distinction; administered to him such restoratives as immediately renewed his health and strength; armed him with her own hands; supplied him with an excellent war-horse; and, to the utter astonishment of the seneschal, carried him off to the court of Arthur. At the moment of entering the city of Cardigan, she made herself known to

Lancelot as the lady of the lake, his guardian fairy, and, honouring him with a kiss on the forehead, vanished from his sight.

Meleagans, true to his appointment, was already in the lists, braving all the round table, and loudly calling on Lancelot, whose appearance to meet the challenge he naturally considered as impossible. Again and again he repeated his defiance; but at last a well-known voice answered, "Behold me! let us begin the combat." Though appalled by the consciousness of his crimes, and by the recollection of his rival's superiority, the felon summoned all his resolution, and, being animated by despair, defended his life with great skill and obstinacy: but his utmost efforts could only delay the triumph of Sir Lancelot, who, after piercing him to the heart, received the crown of victory from the hands of his royal mistress.

Thus ends the romance of La Charette, the joint work of Chrestien de Troyes and of Geoffroy de Ligny; to the former of whom we owe the story of Le Chevalier au Lion, the original of a most beautiful old English poem called Ywain and Gawain, translated, (as I suspect) by Clerk of Tranent, and published by the late Mr. Ritson. We now proceed to the romance of Morte Arthur, which, as we have already observed, is translated from a French prose romance of the same name

forming, in the printed copies of the romance of Lancelot du Lac, the fifth and last part of that story. It also exists in MS. in Mr. Douce's library, and at the Museum. Bibl. Reg. 14 E. iii.—19 C. xiii. —and 20 C. vi.

The knights of the round table had completed the quest of the San-Gréal, and had firmly established the empire of Arthur, by the defeat of all his enemies. Four years of peace and tranquillity had been endured by these august personages with tolerable patience: but at length they became tired of living on the recollection of old adventures, and anxious to achieve new ones; and Arthur joyfully adopted the advice of Guenever, to proclaim a solemn tournament at Winchester, under the direction of Sir Galehaut.

The king, not less impatient than his knights for this festival, set off some days before to superintend the preparations, leaving the queen with her court at Camalot. Sir Lancelot, under pretext of indisposition, remained behind also; and Sir Agravain staid to watch the conduct of the lovers. They, however, at this time disappointed his malice. Lancelot meant no more than to attend the tournament in disguise; and, having communicated his project to his mistress, mounted his horse,

set off without any attendant, and, counterfeiting the feebleness of age, took the most unfrequented road to Winchester, and passed unnoticed, as an old knight who was going to be a spectator of the sports. Even Arthur and Ywain, who happened to behold him from the windows of a castle under which he passed, were the dupes of his disguise. But an accident betrayed him. His horse happened to stumble; and the hero, forgetting for a moment his assumed character, recovered the animal with a strength and agility so peculiar to himself, that they instantly recognised the inimitable Lancelot. They, however, suffered him to proceed on his journey without interruption, convinced that his extraordinary feats of arms must discover him at the approaching festival.

In the evening, Lancelot was magnificently entertained, as a stranger knight, at the neighbouring castle of Ascalot. The lord of this castle had a daughter of exquisite beauty; and two sons, lately received into the order of knighthood, one of whom was at that time sick in bed, and thereby prevented from attending the tournament, for which the two brothers had long made the necessary preparations. Lancelot offered to attend the other, if he were permitted to borrow the armour of the invalid; and the lord of Ascalot, without knowing

the name of his guest, being satisfied from his appearance that his son could not have a better assistant in arms, most thankfully accepted the offer. In the mean time, the young lady, who had been much struck by the first appearance of the stranger knight, continued to survey him with increased attention, and, before the conclusion of supper, became so deeply enamoured of him, that, after frequent changes of colour, and other symptoms which the experienced Sir Lancelot could not possibly mistake, she was obliged to retire to her chamber, where she threw herself on her bed, and lay drowned in tears.

Lancelot wist what was her will;
Well he knew by other mo:
Her brother cleped he him till,
And to her chamber gonne they go.

He set him down, for the maiden's sake,
Upon her bed, there she lay;
Courteously to her he spake,
For to comfort that fair may.
In her arms she gan him take,
And these wordes gan she say:
"Sir, bot gif that ye it make,
"Save my life no leech may!"

" Lady," he said, " thou must let;
" For me, (ne give thee nothing ill!)
" In another stede mine heart is set;
" It is not at mine owne will.
" In earth is nothing that shall me let
" To be thy knight, *loud and still* *;
" Another time we may be met,
" When thou may better speak thy fill."

" Sith I of thee ne may have more,
" As thou art hardy knight and free,
" In the tournament that thou would bear
" Some sign of mine that men might see!"
" Lady, thy sleeve thou shalt off sheer,
" I wol it take for the love of thee;
" So did I never no lady's ere,
" But one, that most hath loved me."

This negotiation being thus adjusted, Lancelot set off in the morning with the young knight; who, on his objecting to lodgings in the city of Winchester, where he probably would have been easily recognised, conducted him to the castle of a lady, sister to the lord of Ascalot, by whom they were magnificently entertained. The next day, after

* That is, " in the noise of battle, and in the silence of peace." It seems to be a foolish but very common phrase, generally used as a mere expletive for the convenience of the rhyme.

the usual repast, they put on their armour, which was perfectly plain, and without any device, as was usual to youths during the first year of knighthood, their shields being only painted red, as some colour was necessary to enable them to be recognised by their attendants. Lancelot wore on his crest the sleeve of the maid of Ascalot, and thus equipped proceeded to the tournament, where the knights were divided into two companies, the one commanded by Sir Galehaut, the other by king Arthur. Having surveyed the combat for a short time from without the lists, and observed that Sir Galehaut's party began to give way, they joined the press, and attacked the royal knights, the young man choosing such adversaries as were suited to his strength; whilst his companion selected the principal champions of the round table, and successively overthrew Ywain, Bohort, and Lyonel. The astonishment of the spectators was extreme,—for it was thought that no one but Lancelot could possess such invincible force,—and at the same time the favour on his crest seemed to preclude the possibility of his being thus disguised. At length, Sir Hector, Lancelot's brother, rode to attack the wonderful stranger, and, after a dreadful combat, wounded him dangerously in the head; but was himself completely stunned by a blow on the hel-

met, and felled to the ground, together with his horse: after which, the conqueror rode off at full speed, attended by his companion.

Having reached the forest, he pulled up his vizor to remove the blood, which nearly filled his eyes; and, finding himself in great pain, readily consented to follow the young knight to the castle of the noble lady with whom they had lodged on the preceding day. A skilful leech was summoned, who, having examined the wound, declared that long rest and great attention were necessary to his recovery. In the mean time Arthur was so anxious to know the name of the victor, that he proclaimed a second tournament, to be holden at the expiration of a month, in hopes of attracting him to Winchester, and thereby making the discovery; and, in fact, Sir Lancelot, on hearing the news, determined, weak as he was, to re-enter the lists: but at his first effort to rise from his bed his wound opened; he swooned from loss of blood; and his leech having threatened him with certain death if he should repeat the attempt, he was condemned to lie still; whilst Arthur, who could obtain no news of the unknown knight, returned unsatisfied to Camalot.

No sooner was Lancelot able to mount his horse than his young friend caused him to be conveyed to

the castle of Ascalot, where he was attended with the greatest care by the good earl, by his two sons, and above all by his fair daughter, whose medical skill probably much hastened the period of his convalescence. His health was almost completely restored, when Sir Hector, Sir Bohort, and Sir Lyonel, who, immediately after the return of the court to Camalot, had undertaken the *quest* of their relation, unexpectedly discovered him walking on the walls of the castle. Their meeting was very joyful; for, though Arthur's knights frequently took a pleasure in secreting themselves from their friends, they were always marvellously delighted at being found by them. They passed three days in the castle amidst constant festivities, and bantered each other on the events of the preceding tournament; Lancelot, though he began by vowing vengeance against the author of his wound, having ended by declaring it extremely pleasant to be so forcibly convinced of his brother's extraordinary prowess. He then dismissed them with a message to the queen, promising to follow immediately, it being necessary that he should take a formal leave of his kind hosts, as well as of the fair maid of Ascalot. The young lady, after vainly attempting to detain him by her tears and solicitations, said,

"Sir, gif that your wille it were,
"Sith I of thee ne may have mair,
"Some thing ye wolde be-leave me here,
"To look on, when me longeth sare!"

Lancelot spake with herte free,
For to comfort that lady hend,
"Mine armure shall I leave with thee,
"And in thy brother's will I wend.
"Look then, ne long not after me,
"For here I may no longer *lend**;
"Long time ne shall it nought be
"That I ne shall either come or send."

In the mean time, the three knights had delivered their message to Guenever, who was in paroxysms of joy at the expected return of her lover; and had then proceeded to announce to the king, who was hunting with Gawain, the news of their having discovered Sir Lancelot. Gawain, impatient to see him, immediately took leave of the king, and rode with all speed to Ascalot: but the knight was already gone. He was, however, sumptuously entertained, and, in answer to his questions, was distinctly informed by the earl's daughter, that she had bestowed her heart upon his friend, and that she had good reason to flatter herself with being

* tarry. Sibbald's Gloss. *leind, leynd, lane.*

the lady of his affections; as a pledge of which, he had left with her his well-known suit of armour. Gawain, though at first incredulous, could not resist this apparently decisive testimony; and, after requesting the maiden that he also might, for Lancelot's sake, have the honour of being admitted amongst her knights, took his leave, and returned to court.

Several days passed away, during which the absent knight was most anxiously expected: yet he did not appear; and his return was so long protracted, that Arthur began to express the utmost fear for his safety,—insisting that, if his wounds had not opened afresh, it was impossible that he should so long delay the execution of his promise. Gawain replied by expatiating on the charms of the maid of Ascalot; related the story which had been confided to him; and observed, that such an adventure would be a legitimate excuse for a much longer absence. This conversation, which took place in the presence of Guenever, sunk deep into her heart; she retired to her chamber; abandoned herself to the most violent transports of jealousy; and, secluded from all but her confidential attendants, left king Arthur and his courtiers to amuse themselves without her; which they were so little able to do, that the court became the abode of fixed dulness and

melancholy. Lancelot was, during all this time, very unnecessarily leading a life of solitude at a hermitage in the forest; where being accidentally found at last by Hector and Lyonel, he heard all the strange conjectures to which his absence had given rise, as well as the despair of his disconsolate mistress, and was easily induced to gratify all parties by his return.

The joy produced by his appearance was excessive. Arthur, who was sitting with Gawain in a watch-tower, discovered him at a distance on the plain; ran out of the gates to meet him, at the head of all his knights; kissed and embraced him; and assisted with his own hands in preparing for him a bed of honour covered with cloth of gold. All flocked round him, anxious to render him any service; plied him with questions; listened to his adventures; almost stifled him with embraces; and waited on him with such assiduity, that he could not, during the first three days, find a single opportunity of seeing his mistress without a crowd of witnesses. But the important occupation of hunting could not be long neglected; and Arthur having repaired to the forest *to play*, Lancelot, by staying at home with Hector and Lyonel, found at last a pretext for paying his court to the queen. Guenever, feeling quite convinced of his infidelity,

thought herself fully justified in reproaching him with his passion for the maid of Ascalot; which, she observed, however justified by that lady's superior charms, unfortunately tended to lessen his reputation, by giving him a disgust for those nobler pursuits in which his eminence over all the knights of the world was hitherto so well established. She, however, trusted to his honour, and hoped that his new passion would never induce him to betray the intimacy in which he had lived with one who, however inferior to her rival in beauty, had at least proved the sincerity and constancy of her affection. This address was certainly intended to extort a justification, which she ardently wished to hear; but it produced a contrary effect.

" Madam," he said, " for cross and rood,
" What betokeneth all this moan?
" By him that bought me with his blood,
" Of these tidings know I none!
" But, by these wordis, thinketh me
" Away ye wolde that I were;
" Now have good day, my lady free,
" For, sooth, thou seest me never mair!"

With these words he rushed out of the queen's apartment; hurried to his own; put on a suit of

armour; mounted his horse; and, galloping off at full speed, arrived in a few minutes within the forest; whilst his friends, who heard a little too late the intelligence of his quarrel with the queen, were unable to prevent his hasty departure, and, after an ineffectual pursuit, in which they tired their horses and themselves, returned full of indignation against the unfortunate Guenever. Even Arthur himself, who, when he came from hunting, was much disappointed and grieved at this second loss of his bravest knight, would have been much disposed to join in their resentment, but that he found his wife in a state of grief and despondency, which proved that she was already too severely punished by the loss of Lancelot, for any indiscreet language of which she might have been guilty.

But her misfortunes were not yet terminated. A certain squire who was in her immediate service, having some cause of dislike to Gawain, determined to destroy him by poison at a public entertainment. For this purpose he conveyed the poison into an apple of remarkable size, which he placed on the top of several others, and put the dish before the queen, hoping that, as Gawain was the knight whom she esteemed next to Sir Lancelot, she would make him the fatal present. But it happened otherwise. A Scotish knight of high

distinction, happening to arrive on that day, was seated on one side of the queen; and to him, as a stranger, she presented the apple; which he had no sooner tasted than he instantly expired. The whole court was, of course, thrown into confusion: the knights rose from table, darting looks of indignation at the wretched Guenever, whose tears and exclamations were unable to exculpate her from a crime apparently so notorious: *treacle* and other antidotes were applied in vain; and nothing remained but to order a magnificent funeral for the murdered stranger.

Knightis done none other might,
But buried him, with *doel** enough,
At a chapel, with riche light,
In a forest by a *swough*†.
A riche tomb they did be-dight;
A crafty clerk the letters *drough*‡,
How "there lay the Scotish knight
"That queen Ganore with poison *slough*§."
After this a time befell,
To the court there com a knight,

* grief: *deuil*, Fr.

† I cannot explain this word, as it usually means a noise or clamour.

‡ drew. § slew.

His brother he was, as I you tell,
And Sir Mador for sooth he hight.
He was a handy man, and snell,
In tournament, and eke in fight.

Sir Mador was, at the time of his arrival, perfectly ignorant of his brother's death: but having accidentally seen the chapel while hunting in the forest, he entered it to say his prayers; and, being attracted by the magnificence of a newly-erected tomb, perused the fatal inscription, and hastily returned to court, determined on immediate and signal vengeance. He rode into the hall; loudly accused the queen of treason; and insisted on her being given up to punishment, unless she should find, within an appointed time, a knight hardy enough to risk his life in support of her innocence. Arthur, powerful as he was, did not dare to deny the appeal, but was compelled, with a heavy heart, to ratify the conditions; and Mador sternly took his departure, leaving the royal couple plunged in no small terror and anxiety.

During all this time Sir Lancelot had taken up his abode with a hermit in the forest, and had begun to find his companion, however edifying, much less amusing than the beautiful mistress with whom he had so perversely quarrelled, when the news of

Sir Mador's challenge fortunately reached his ears. He had hitherto lamented, to very little purpose, the violence of his own temper, and the jealousy of Guenever, and had considered, as ardent lovers usually do, that a reconciliation was the most impossible thing in the world. But this intelligence revived his spirits, and he began to prepare with the utmost cheerfulness for a contest, which, if its issue should be successful, would insure him at once the affection of his mistress and the gratitude of his sovereign.

The suddenness of Sir Mador's accusation, as we have seen, had left to Arthur very little time for reflection; but on the following day he took Sir Gawain with him into a private apartment for the purpose of discussing all the circumstances of this strange and calamitous adventure. During their consultation, the habit of curiosity inherent in all knights frequently drew them to the window of their tower, the walls of which were washed by a river; and on this river they descried, with great surprise, a boat richly ornamented, and covered with an awning of cloth of gold, which appeared to be floating down the stream without any human guidance. The subject of their consultation was, for a while, forgotten in their anxiety to examine this wonderful boat, which fortunately drove to

shore at the same instant. They descended, and entered it. Beneath the awning was a bed decked with princely magnificence; and on lifting up the clothes, they discovered the dead body of a beautiful woman, in whose features Gawain easily recognised the lovely maid of Ascalot. Pursuing their search, they discovered a purse richly embroidered with gold and jewels, and within the purse a letter; which Arthur opened, and found addressed to himself and to all the knights of the round table, stating that Lancelot du Lac, the most accomplished of knights, and most beautiful of men, but at the same time the most boorish and inflexible, had by his rigour produced the death of the wretched maiden, whose love was no less invincible than his cruelty.* The king immediately gave orders for the interment of the lady with all the honours suited to her rank; at the same time explaining to the knights, whom he convened for the purpose of attending her funeral, the history of her affection for Lancelot, which rendered her a subject of common interest to them all. Gawain at the same time repaired to the queen, to apologize for having inadvertently conveyed to her a false impression of Lancelot's fidelity;

" Of Ascalot that maiden free
" I said you she was his *lemàn* *;
" That I so *galbed* † it reweth me,
" For all the sooth now tell I can.
" He *n'olde* ‡ her nought, we mow well see;
" *Forthy* §, dead is that white as swan;
" This letter thereof warrant wol be:
" She plaineth on Lancelot to each man."

Guenever became furious at this intelligence; she felt that all her present misfortunes were owing to her foolish quarrel with her lover,—a quarrel occasioned solely by the sarcastic remarks of Sir Gawain; whom therefore, without listening to his excuses, she drove contumeliously from her presence ||.

But as the day appointed by Sir Mador was fast approaching, it became necessary that she should endeavour to procure a champion for her defence; and conducted by Arthur she successively adjured

* mistress. † *galer*, Fr. to talk lightly.
‡ ne would, would not. § therefore.

|| A leaf of the MS. is here torn out: but no part of the story appears to be missing; the 136 lines which are wanting having been probably employed partly in Guenever's ejaculations, and partly in the author's description of the danger to which she was now exposed.

Sir Hector, Sir Lyonel, Sir Bohort, and even Sir Gawain, to undertake the battle. She fell on her knees before them; called heaven to witness her innocence of the crime alleged against her; but was sternly answered by all, that they could not undertake the battle, after having seen with their own eyes the sudden death of the knight whom she had manifestly poisoned; and that she, whose violence and injustice had driven from court the incomparable Sir Lancelot, did not deserve a defender. She retired, therefore, dejected and disconsolate; but the sight of the fatal pile, on which if found guilty she was doomed to be burned, exciting her to a fresh effort, she again repaired to Sir Bohort, threw herself at his feet, and, piteously crying on him for mercy, fell into a swoon. The brave knight was not proof against this appeal to his feelings; he raised her up, and hastily promised that he would undertake her cause, if no other or better champion should present himself. He then summoned his friends, and communicated to them his resolution; and as a mortal combat with Sir Mador was a most fearful enterprise, they agreed to accompany him in the morning to the hermitage in the forest, where he proposed to receive absolution from the hermit, and to make his peace with heaven before he entered the lists.

As they came by the forest side
Their orisouns for to make,
The noblest knight then saw they ride
That ever was in earthly shape.
His *lorcine** lemed all with pride;
Steed and armure all was blake;
His name is nought to *hele*† and hide,
He hight Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Overjoyed at this meeting, they fell on their knees and returned thanks to Providence; after which, having, in answer to Lancelot's questions, confirmed the news of the queen's imminent danger, they received his instructions to return to court, to comfort her as well as they could,—but to conceal his intention of undertaking her defence, which he meant to do in the character of an unknown adventurer.

On their return to the castle, they found that mass was finished, and had scarcely time to speak to the queen before they were summoned into the hall to dinner. A general gloom was spread over the countenances of all the guests; Arthur him-

* reins, (Dict. du vieux Langage) perhaps the whole caparison of the horse.

self was unable to conceal his dejection; and the wretched Guenever, motionless and bathed in tears, sat in trembling expectation of Sir Mador's appearance. Nor was it long ere he stalked into the hall, and, with a voice of thunder, rendered more impressive by the general silence, demanded instant justice on his victim; threatening that, if it were delayed, he would himself tear her from them and sacrifice her before their eyes. Arthur meekly answered, that little of the day was yet spent; that dinner was not over; and, that perhaps a champion might yet be found capable of satisfying his impatience for battle. Sir Bohort now rose from table, after casting a significant look on Sir Lyonel, and shortly returning in complete armour, resumed his place, after receiving the embraces and thanks of Arthur, who now began to resume some degree of confidence. But Sir Mador, growing every moment more impatient, again repeated his denunciations of vengeance, and insisted that the combat should instantly take place.

Then, as Sir Mador loudest spake,
The queen of treason to *ly-calle* *,
Cometh Sir Launcelot du Lake,
Ridand right into the hall.

* accuse.

His steed and armure all was blake,
His visére over his eyen falle;
Many a man began to quake;
A-dread of him nigh were they a

Then spake the king, mickle of might,
That hende was *in eche a sithe* *,
" Sir, is it your will to 'light,
" Eat and drink and make you blithe?"
Launcelot spake as a strange knight,
" Nay, sir!" he said, " *as swythe* †,
" I herde tell here of a fight;
" I come to save a lady's life.

" Evil hath the queen by-set her deeds,
" That she hath worshiped many a knight,
" And she hath no man, in her needs,
" That for her life dare take a fight!
" Thou, that her of treason *gredes* ‡,
" Hastily that thou be dight!
" Out of thy wits though that thou yede,
" To day shalt thou prove all thy might!"

Sir Mador, though somewhat surprised, was not appalled by the stern challenge and still more formidable appearance of his mighty antagonist,

* at all times. † as soon; i. e. immediately.
‡ accusest;—to *grede* is, literally, to *cry*.

but instantly and cheerfully prepared for the encounter. At the first shock, both were unhorsed. They then drew their swords, and commenced a combat which lasted from noon till evening; when Sir Mador, whose strength began to fail, was at length felled to the ground by Sir Lancelot, and compelled to sue for mercy. The victor, whose arm was again raised to terminate the life of his opponent, instantly dropped his sword, courteously lifted up the fainting Sir Mador, and even condescended so far as to reveal his name, frankly confessing that he had never yet found an equally formidable enemy. The other, with similar courtesy, solemnly renounced all further projects of vengeance for his brother's death; and the two knights, now become fast friends, embraced each other with the greatest cordiality. In the mean time Arthur, having recognised Sir Lancelot, whose helmet was now unlaced, rushed down into the lists, followed by all his knights, to welcome and thank his deliverer; Guenever swooned with joy; and the place of combat suddenly exhibited a scene of the most tumultuous delight. The general satisfaction was still further increased by the discovery of the real culprit, whose attempt to poison Sir Gawain had been productive of such extensive misery. Having accidentally incurred some sus-

picion, he confessed his crime, and was publicly punished in the presence of Sir Mador; who, seeing the queen so fully justified, became anxious to make her amends, by every service and attention in his power, for the injustice of his former accusation. The court now returned to the castle, which, with the title of "la joyeuse garde" bestowed on it perhaps in consequence of the festivities celebrated in honour of the queen's exculpation, was conferred on Sir Lancelot by Arthur, as a memorial of his gratitude.

The happiness and security of Guenever, and of her paramour, now appeared to be permanently established; but a plot was already laid, which was destined to destroy them, together with the king and kingdom. Though Gawain was warmly attached to Sir Lancelot, his brother Agravain had been, from the first, the envious and implacable enemy of that knight; and, having united himself with Modred the king's nephew, who headed a considerable party at court, determined on preferring against the lovers an open accusation of treason. It was in vain that Gawain exerted all his eloquence to oppose a measure of which he foretold all the fatal consequences, and implored his brother to desist, on the ground of the long and sincere friendship which had subsisted between

him and Lancelot. Agravain was inflexible; and Arthur having entered the hall and demanded the cause of this violent altercation, Sir Gawain retired with his brothers Gaheriet and Gueheres, that he might not become an accomplice in the action which he so strongly disapproved.

Arthur, who had hitherto been free from suspicion, was equally astonished and distressed at hearing that the champion of his throne was his worst enemy, and at reading in the eyes of the whole assembly the truth and notoriety of the accusation. But however strongly he felt the wish, he was unable to devise the means of vengeance, which were thus suggested by Sir Agravain:

"Sir, ye, and all the court *lydene* *,
"Wendeth tomorrow an hunting right;
"And sithen, send word to the queen,
"That ye will dwell without all night.
"And I, and other twelve knights keen,
"Full privily we shall us dight;
"We shall him have, *withouten ween* †,
"Tomorrow, or any day be light."

This treacherous project was immediately carried into execution. Guenever, perfectly off her guard, sent the usual summons to Sir Lancelot; and the

* together. † certainly; i. e. without a supposition.

knight, though warned by Sir Bohort and other friends to beware of Agravain, could not refrain from accepting so pleasing an invitation; nor could he be persuaded to carry, to such a meeting, the apparently useless incumbrance of a shield and coat of mail. He, however, took his sword, which he concealed under his night-gown, and arrived, apparently undiscovered, at the queen's apartment: but scarcely was he locked in the embraces of his mistress, when he heard at the door the voices of Sir Agravain and Sir Modred; who loudly accusing him of treason, tauntingly added, that the means of escape were now effectually prevented. Guenever was half dead with apprehension; but Lancelot, finding his situation so desperate, started from the bed, enveloped his left arm in his gown, seized his sword in his right, suddenly set open the door; and, when one only of his adversaries had rushed in, as suddenly closed it. The armed knight advanced against him as to an easy victory, but at the first blow fell lifeless at his feet.

The knight that Launcelot has slain,
His armure found he fair and bright;
Hastily he hath them off *drayne**,
And therein himselfe dight.

* drawn.

"Now know thou well, Sir Agrawayne,
"Thou prisons me no more to night!"
Out then sprang he with mickle main,
Himself ayenst them all to fight.

The battle was now quickly decided. The treacherous Agravain was the first victim; his ten companions soon fell around him; and Sir Modred, escaping in time, ran off to the king with the news of the ill success which had attended their stratagem. Lancelot hastened to Sir Bohort, related his adventure, spent the remainder of the night in assembling and arming all his friends; and at day-break put himself at their head, and marched into the forest, after leaving a certain number of spies to bring him intelligence of the measures which should be adopted during his absence.

Though Lancelot had thus escaped, the queen still remained in the king's power; and as her guilt was notorious, his council unanimously doomed her to the flames.

The fire then made they in the felde;
Therto they brought that lady free;
All that ever might weapon welde,
About her armed for to be.

Gawain, that stiff was under shelde,
Gaheriet ne Gueheres ne would not see;
In their chamber they them held;
Of her they hadde grete pité.

The king Arthur, that ilke tide,
Gawain and Gueheres for-sent;
Their answers were, nought for to hide,
"They n' olde be of his assent;
"Gawain would never be beside,
"There any woman should be brent."
Gaheriet and Gueheres, with little pride,
All unarmed thither they went.

Lancelot, as might have been expected, having received timely intelligence of this event, determined to rescue his mistress; attacked the escort; carried her off, and put all his enemies to the sword. Unfortunately, Gawain's brothers, who had disdained to bear arms on such an occasion, and were consequently quite defenceless, were involved in the indiscriminate massacre.

At the news of this slaughter, the mind of Arthur was equally agitated by the opposite sentiments of fury and consternation; while the unfortunate Gawain, who had hitherto been guided

only by his compassion for the queen and friendship for Lancelot, now gave himself up to sentiments of deadly hatred and revenge against the authors of this outrage. Rushing into the room where his murdered brothers were deposited, he threw himself on their bodies, and solemnly swore that no peace or truce should ever take place between him and Lancelot, until that innocent blood should be expiated by the death of his enemy or by his own. In the mean time that enemy was scarcely more at his ease, being well acquainted with the noble and manly but implacable mind of Sir Gawain, whom he had irreparably though unintentionally injured, and therefore aware of the fatal consequences that must ensue. But the die was now cast. He retired to his strong castle of *la joyeuse garde*, and, dispatching messengers in all directions, soon collected a large and well-appointed army; while Arthur on his part sent to collect all his vassals, and prepared to shed the best blood of the country in the prosecution of this unfortunate and unnatural warfare.

Sir Lancelot, who, though perfectly confident in the strength of his troops, was still desirous of preventing the effusion of blood, determined to make a last effort for peace, and to dispatch a damsel to the royal camp, to declare "that the accusation of

Agravain was false, and that he was ready to maintain this assertion against all who might gainsay it.".

The maiden is ready for to ride,
In a full rich aparaylment,
Of *samyte** green, with mickle pride
That wrought was in the orient†.
A dwarf shall wende by her side;
Such was Launcelot's comaundement.
So were the manners in that tide,
When a maid on message went.

This embassy, however, was rejected with disdain; and the king, having collected all his forces, marched to the castle of *la joyeuse garde*, which he blockaded on all sides. The strength of the walls and of the garrison precluded the possibility of an assault; but during seventeen weeks of useless siege, the king and Sir Gawain daily advanced to the walls, accusing Sir Lancelot of treason and cowardice, and defying him to a trial of strength in the field; whilst the knight calmly answered, that they would better show their wisdom by re-

* a rich silk.

† All dresses of extraordinary splendour and magnificence are represented in our romances as coming from the East.

linquishing a fruitless attempt, and by sparing the many brave men on both sides, who were perfectly uninterested in the quarrel. But Bohort and Lyonel were less tolerant than their commander, and at their entreaty he was at length brought to accept the often repeated challenge. A dreadful battle ensued, in which numbers were slain on both sides; and Sir Lyonel was unhorsed and dangerously wounded by Gawain; while Lancelot, overthrowing all who opposed him, seemed to ride through the ranks for the sole purpose of separating the most obstinate combatants, and of stopping the general carnage.

The king was ever near beside,
And hewe on him with all his mayn,
And he so courteous was, *that tide* *,
O † dint that he n'olde smite again.

Bohort de Gannes saught at last,
And to the king then gan he ride;
And on his helm he hit so fast,
That near he lost all his pride.
The stede's *rigge* under him *brast* ‡,
That he to ground fell that tide;
And sith then wordys loud he cast
With Sir Launcelot to chide.

* that time. † one. ‡ the horse's *back* broke or *burst*.

" Sir, *shallow* * all day suffer so
" That the king shall thee assail?
" And sith his herte is so *thro* †
" Thy courtesy may not avail?
" Batailles shal there never be mo,
" An thou wilt do by my counsail;
" Giveth us leave them all to slo,
" For thou hast vanquished this bataille!

" Alas," quod Launcelot, " wo is me,
" That ever should I see with sight,
" Before me him unhorsed be,
" The noble king that made me knight!"
He was then so courteous and free,
That down off his stede he 'light,
The king theron then horses he,
And bade him flee, gif that he might.

When the king was horsed *thore*,
Launcelot lookys he upon,
How courtesy was in him more
Than ever was in any mon.
He thought on things that had been *ore* ‡,
The tears from his eyen ran;
He said, " Alas," with sighing sore,
" That ever yet this war began!"

* shalt thou. † eager, fiery, &c. Sax.

‡ for *ere*, i. e. before; *thore* for *there*—both on account of the rhyme.

The battle, however, still continued, till both parties were compelled by lassitude and by the approach of night to withdraw: and such was the rancour of Arthur, that the contest was renewed on the following day; when the victory, after much bloodshed, being gained by Sir Lancelot, and Gawain and Sir Bohort, who had engaged in single combat, being both wounded, the siege was at length abandoned, and Arthur retired to make fresh preparations.

Such was, it seems, the celebrity of this war, that it ultimately reached the ears of the Pope; and the bishop of Rochester, being then at Rome, received the commands of his holiness to repair to Arthur and to Lancelot, with directions that the latter should consent to restore the queen, that the former should receive her into favour, and that in case of their non-compliance the whole kingdom should be laid under the papal interdict. Both parties professed equal submission to the injunctions of their spiritual father; and the only conditions required by Sir Lancelot were, that the bishop should solemnly pledge himself for the queen's safety, and procure a safe-conduct for him to the king, that he might lead her to court with due ceremony, and see her reinstated in all her former

honours. These terms were readily conceded by Arthur, and an early day was appointed for the procession.

Launcelot and the queen were cledde
In robes of a rich wede,
Of samyte white, with silver shredde
Ivory saddle, and white stede;
Saumbucs * of the same thredde,
That wrought was in the heathen *thede* †.
Launcelot her bridle ledde,
In the romans as we rede.

The other knights, everichone,
In samyte green of heathen land,
And their kirtles, ride alone;
And each knight a green garland;
Saddles set with riche stone;
Each one a branch of olive in hand.
All the field about hem shone;
The knightes rode full loud singand.

Sir Lancelot, having formally restored the queen, attempted to exculpate both her and himself; but Arthur, as might be supposed, was more offended than softened by such a justification.

* housings † land, nation, Sax.

Then bespake him Sir Gawain,
That was hardy knight and free,
" Launcelot, thou may it nought with-say'n,
" That thou hast slain my brethren three!
" Forthy, shall we prove our main,
" In field, whether shall have the *gree**.
" *Or*† either of us shall other slay'n,
" Blithe shall I never be!"

Lancelot, having vainly urged in reply, that Agravain had fallen the victim of his own treachery, and that the other brothers had owed their death to an unfortunate accident, and by no means to his orders, again addressed himself to the king, and inquired whether he was now to consider all hopes of an accommodation as absolutely desperate? Arthur replied in the affirmative. He then asked, whether, on his promise to renounce immediately his English possessions, to retire into Britany, and never more to return, he might be assured of a safe-conduct, and of being left in the tranquil possession of his foreign dominions; and was told that his departure should be unmolested: but Gawain added, that he would do well to prepare all his means of defence, as the royal army was already assembling, and would speedily be embarked to attack him in his own territory.

* degree; superiority. † ere, until.

Lancelot, after this unsuccessful conference, retired to his castle, assembled his most zealous friends; marched them to Caerleon, and embarked for Britany; where he was received with enthusiasm by his long-neglected subjects. He began by rewarding the services of those who had constantly followed his fortunes; he invested Sir Bohort with the kingdom of Gannes; bestowed on Lyonel the crown of France *formerly called Gaul*; on Hector des Marais the sovereignty of his own dominions; and divided amongst his other friends the whole of the lands at his disposal, reserving to himself little more than the strong city and castle of Benwick, which he plentifully supplied with provisions, and secured by a select and numerous garrison.

In the mean time king Arthur, fully aware of the importance and danger of the enterprise which he was about to undertake, convened his council, and represented to them the necessity of choosing a viceroy to govern his dominions during his absence; and the unanimous choice of his barons having fallen on his nephew Modred, he willingly confirmed their nomination, marshalled his army, and embarked in pursuit of his enemy. After a prosperous voyage he landed on the coast of Britany; wasted the country during his progress with fire

and sword; and, learning that Sir Lancelot had shut himself up in his capital, finally encamped his army at a short distance from the city.

Lancelot now called a council of war to deliberate on his future operations. Sir Bohort, Sir Galahad, and Sir Brademagus advised an immediate attack on the enemy in the open field; Sir Lyonel recommended a defensive war; and Lancelot himself not only supported the latter opinion, but even proposed to send a new embassy to Arthur, with such proposals as he could not, in common justice, venture to reject.

The maid was full *sheen** to shew,
Upon her steed when she was set;
Her 'parayl all of one hue,
Of a green velvèt;
In her hand a branch new,
For why that no man should her let.
Thereby men messengers knew,
In *ostes*† when that men them met.

The king was locked in a field
By a river broad and *dreghe*‡;
A while she *hoved*§ and beheld;
Pavilyons were pight on high;

* beautiful. † armies. ‡ slow (Sibbald's Gloss. v. *dreich.*) § waited.

She saw there many, comely *teld* *
With *pommelles* † bright as goldis *beghe* ‡;
On one *hyng* § the kingis shield;
That pavyloun she drew her nigh.

Being accosted by Sir Lucan the *boteler*, she was introduced into the great hall of the royal tent, where Arthur was seated with Sir Gawain, and falling on her knees delivered her credentials. She then explained, verbally, the terms which she was ordered to propose, viz. "that a truce should be concluded for twelve months, during which the contending parties should arrange the conditions of a definitive peace; on the conclusion of which, Lancelot promised to repair to the Holy Land, and to pass the remainder of his days in acts of devotion."

Arthur summoned all his barons to deliberate on these proposals, which he was personally desirous of accepting, and which they unanimously concurred in approving; but the implacable Sir Gawain sternly declared, that, "whilst the blood of his brethren was unatoned, he was determined to listen to no accommodation: that, if the king thought fit to retire, he would singly prosecute the

* painted, Ritson. † balls of the tents, Fr.
‡ crown, Sax. § hung.

quarrel, with the aid of such friends as might be induced to follow him; but, that the king would do well to recollect that the cause in which Agravain had fallen a sacrifice was personal to his majesty; and that the other brothers had been murdered in consequence of their obedience to the royal mandate, on an occasion which they utterly disapproved." Arthur could not withstand these arguments. The messenger was dismissed; the proposals rejected; and both parties prepared for a war of extermination.

Gawain was perfectly aware that nothing was to be hoped from an assault, and that the city, if reducible at all, could only be taken by famine; but, at least, he could gratify his resentment by daily insulting his enemy: and so grating were these insults, that, though they could not overcome the patience of Sir Lancelot, they daily brought forward the boldest of his champions. These successively engaged in single combat with their pertinacious and provoking assailant, and were successively overthrown, and many of them grievously wounded, by the superiority of his skill and strength; whilst such were his *grace* and good fortune, that during six months he constantly escaped unhurt from these encounters. But his soul thirsted for the blood of Sir Lancelot; and this patient ad-

versary was at length compelled in honour to accept the challenge.

The lord that great was of honoùr,
Himself, Sir Launcelot du Lake,
Above the gates, upon the tower,
Comely to the king he spake:
"My lord, God save your honoùr!
"Me is woe now, for your sake,
"Against thy kin to stand in *stour** :
"But needs I must this battle take."

We have already seen that Sir Gawain, though always sufficiently formidable, possessed, by the benediction of heaven, the peculiar privilege of becoming doubly strong from *undertime* (nine o'clock in the morning) till noon; and of this peculiarity Sir Lancelot was well aware. He therefore exerted his utmost skill in parrying the blows of his adversary, till he was compelled, by a necessary regard for his own safety, to seize an advantage offered by Gawain's inconsiderate fury, and to employ his whole strength in a blow which terminated the contest.

Through the helm, into the heved,
Was hardy Gawain wounded so,
That unnethe was him life leaved;
On foot might he no farther go.

* battle.

But wightly his sword about he waved,
For ever he was both keen and thro.
Launcelot then him lyand leaved,
For all the world he n'olde him slo.

Launcelot then drew *on dryhe**,
His sword was in his hand drawn;
And Sir Gawain loud gan cry,
"Traitour and coward, come again!
"When I am whole, and going on hie,
"Then will I prove, with might and main;
"And yet, an thou wouldest nigh me nigh,
"Thou shalt well wete I am not slain!"

"Gawain, while thou might stiffly stand,
"Many a stroke of thee I stood;
"And I forbare thee, in every land,
"For love, and for the kingis blood.
"When thou art whole, in heart and hand,
"I rede thee, turn, and change thy mood!
"While I am Launcelot, and man livand,
"God shielde me from *workes wode*†!

"But have good day, my lord the king,
"And your doughty knightes all!
"Wendeth home, and leave your warring;
"Ye win no worship at this wall!

* probably *behind*, (Ve *a-dreich*, Sibbald's Gloss.) † evil works.

" An I would my knights out bring
" I wot, full sore rue it ye shall;
" My lord, therefore think on such thing,
" How fele folk therefore might fall."

With these words, Lancelot calmly retired into the city; while Gawain was conveyed to his tent, and consigned to the care of the king's physicians.

The wound was so severe, that during the first fortnight his recovery was very doubtful: at length, however, he was restored to health, and with it to his implacable desire of vengeance. A second time he forced Lancelot into the field, and a second time, after a long and doubtful conflict, was brought to the ground by his gallant enemy, whom he vainly tried to provoke by reiterated menaces and insults to follow up his blow, and to rid him of a life which was solely devoted to one fatal purpose. The sword had accidentally struck him on the place of his former wound. His pain was greater, and his recovery slower than before; and he was still unable to carry arms,—when an unexpected piece of intelligence compelled Arthur to abandon his enterprise against Sir Lancelot, and to return with all speed to England.

That false traitour Sir Modred,
(*The kinge's foster-son he wes,*
And eke his own son, as I read,
Therefore men him for steward ches.)

So falsely hath he England led,
Wete you well, withouten lese,
His *eme'is* * wife would he wed:
That many a man rued that *rese* † !

As there was at that time little regular communication between distant countries, and as no event of sufficient importance to require the dispatch of a special messenger had occurred at the siege of Benwick, Modred, who had tasted the sweets of power, and was in possession of the royal treasury, determined to spread a report of his uncle's death; and, having succeeded in this artifice, summoned an assembly of the principal lords, and obtained from them his own election to the throne. During the festival of his coronation, which took place at Canterbury, he contrived to purchase a number of partisans to his cause, whom he dispatched to the coast with orders to levy troops, and, in the event of Arthur's return, to oppose force by force. He next proceeded to Winchester, where he procured such a number of adherents, that, finding his power solidly established, he resolved on marrying Guenever, whose beauty, it seems, was still a necessary ornament to the court of a British sovereign. But the artful queen, having obtained

* uncle's. † race, inroad, any act of violence.

a fortnight's respite, under pretence of arraying herself with greater magnificence at the approaching wedding, made her escape to London, and, shutting herself up in the tower with a strong garrison of her friends, had the courage to set at defiance the utmost efforts of the usurper.

As Modred was by no means disposed to relinquish his purpose, but lost no time in besieging his intended bride, the archbishop of Canterbury now thought it his duty to interfere, and marching in a solemn procession, preceded by the crucifix, towards the tower, made an excellent harangue to the new king, reproaching him with his incestuous intentions. Unfortunately, however, the object of this advice had very little respect for the church.

" Ah! *nice** clerk!" said Modred, " then,
" Trowest thou to warn me of my will?
" By him that for us suffered pain,
" These wordes shalt thou like full ill!
" With wild horse thou shalt be drayn,
" And hanged high upon a hill!"
The bishop to flee then was fain,
And suffered him his follies to fulfill.

* foolish.

Then he him cursed with book and bell
At Canterbury far in Kent;
Soon when Modred heard therof tell,
To seek the bishop hath he sent.
The bishop durst no longer dwell;
But gold and silver hath he *hent**;
There was no longer for to spell,
But to a wilderness he is went.

Luckily for Guenever, the strength of the tower rendered her more essential service than the imprecations of the poor archbishop; and her persecutor was compelled to relinquish his siege, for the purpose of taking the necessary precautions against his uncle's invasion.

In fact, Arthur had used all possible expedition. He shortly arrived with his fleet off Dover, where he beheld with astonishment a large army of his former subjects prepared to oppose his landing; and no sooner had he reached the shore, than his galleys were attacked with such impetuosity that he lost many of his best troops before he could effect their disembarkation. Amongst the slain was the "good Gawain," who, though "sick and sore unsound" so as to be unable to bear the pressure of his helmet, had called for his armour, and, encountering

* caught, collected in haste.

the first rage of the assailants, had been killed by a blow on his head at the beginning of the conflict. Arthur, however, ignorant of his nephew's fate, succeeded in his attack, made a great slaughter of the enemy, and pursued them till night on the road to Canterbury, where Modred was posted with the main body of his army. On the next morning the rebels boldly advanced to meet him, and the hostile armies encountered on *Barren-down*, where, after a bloody and decisive battle, Arthur was again victorious. Here, while occupied in burying the dead, whose barrows (as our author assures us) are still visible, he first learnt the fate of the illustrious Gawain, whose body he caused to be removed from the galley where it lay, and to be interred with all possible pomp "in a chapell amyd the quire" in the cathedral of Canterbury; after which, finding that Modred had retreated into Wales, he proceeded to the westward as far as Salisbury, whence he issued his orders for assembling a fresh army, whom he appointed to join him at Whitsuntide, and then continuing his march, advanced still further into the West, where Modred had collected a large body of forces, and was again ready to meet him in the field. It was determined by mutual consent that this important battle should take place immediately after the feast

of the Trinity; and Arthur, relying on the well-tried valour of his veterans, though much inferior in point of numbers, fondly anticipated the immediate destruction of his rival, and his own restoration to the undisputed sovereignty of Britain.

But on the eve of the intended battle he had a dreadful *sweven* (dream); and as the dreams of Arthur were often more to the purpose than his waking thoughts, the reader will be pleased to see this in the words of the original.

At night, when Arthur was brought in bed,
(He should have battle upon the morrow)
In strong swevens he was be-sted,
That many a man that day should have sorrow.
Him thought he sat, in gold all *gled* *,
As he was comely king with crown,
Upon a wheel that full wide spread,
And all his knightis to him *boun* †.

The wheel was *ferly* ‡ rich and round,
In world was never none half so high;
Thereon he sat, richly crowned,
With many a *besaunt, broche, and beye* §.

* shining, Sax.; or perhaps for glad, or clad.
† ready, obedient. ‡ wonderfully.
§ coins, ornaments, and crowns of gold.

He looked down upon the ground,
A black water under him he *seye*;
With dragons fele there lay unbound,
That no man durst them nighe nigh.

He was wonder 'feared to fall
Among the fiendes there that fought;
The wheel overturned there withall,
And everych by a limb him caught.
The king gan loud cry and call,
As marred man of wit *unsaught* *.
His chamberlains waked him there withall,
And *wodely* † out of his sleep him brought.

All night gan he wake and weep,
With dreary heart and sorrowful *steven* ‡;
And against day he fell on sleep;
About him was set tapers seven.
Him thought Sir Gawain him did keep,
With mo folk than men can *neven* §;
And a river that was broad and deep;
All seemed angels come from heaven.

The king was never yet so fain,
His foster-son when that he see;
"Welcome," he said, "Sir Gawain!
"An thou might live well were me!

* *unsaved*, i. e. who had lost his wits. † violently.
‡ voice, Sax. § name.

" Now, leve friend, withouten *layn* *,
" What are tho folk that follow thee?"
" Certes, sir," he said again,
" They bide in bliss, there I mot be.

" Lordes they were, and ladies hend,
" This worldis life that han forlorn;
" While I was man on life to lend,
" Against their foen I fought them *forn* †
" Now find I them my moste friend,
" They bless the time that I was born;
" They asked leave with me to wend,
" To meet with you upon this morn.

" A month-day of truce must ye take,
" And then to battle be ye *bayn* ‡;
" You cometh to help Launcelot du Lake,
" With many a man mickle of main.
" To-morrow the battle ye must forsake,
" Or else, certes, ye shall be slain."
The king gan wofully weep and wake,
And said, " Alas this rueful *rayn* §!"

Arthur, on waking, did not fail to communicate to his council the supernatural intelligence and ad-

* lying. † for.

‡ for *boun*, ready; on account of the rhyme.

§ cry, sound, Scot. (V. *rane*, Sibbald's Gloss.)

vice which he had just received; and they all concurred in the propriety of postponing the battle, if it should be possible to obtain the consent of Modred for the purpose.

Sir Lucan the butler was appointed to conduct this negotiation, and repaired with a hundred knights as his attendants; and with a competent number of bishops as his advisers, to the camp of Modred, whom they found, in the first instance, extremely brutal and untractable, but whom they ultimately induced not only to accept of a truce, but even to relinquish the sovereignty of the island, on condition of being invested with an independent and despotic government over the two countries of Kent and Cornwall, with the further assurance of succeeding to the throne after the old king's death. But he also insisted that Arthur should ratify this treaty in his presence, and before twenty-eight knights as witnesses, fourteen of whom should attend each of the contracting parties, and set their hands to the convention in the sight of both armies. Arthur readily acquiesced in these conditions; and the rival chiefs, having selected the stipulated number of attendants, advanced to the place of meeting, which was a small eminence at an equal distance from both camps. But each distrusted the sincerity of the other. They therefore, after

marshalling their respective armies, separately gave orders, that if on either side a sword should be drawn, the trumpets should instantly sound the charge, and the troops advance to the attack without further inquiry.

The terms of the treaty were mutually accepted, and the accommodation nearly concluded, when an adder gliding from beneath a thorn-bush suddenly stung one of the knights; who feeling himself wounded drew his sword to destroy the reptile, and thus inconsiderately gave the signal for battle. Both armies had been equally desirous of peace, and both were incensed to madness by a supposed act of treachery which each imputed to the other. The conflict thus urged on by individual hatred could only terminate in their mutual destruction; and at the close of this dreadful day Arthur found himself supported by two knights only, Sir Lucan and Sir Bedwer, both of whom were grievously wounded; and Sir Modred stood quite alone, surrounded by a confused heap of slaughtered friends and enemies. The old king, losing all recollection of his dream at the sight of his nefarious rival, seized a spear, rushed against him, and pierced him through the body; but Modred at the same instant raising his sword struck him on the helmet with such convulsive strength, that the weapon in-

flicted a mortal wound, and Arthur sunk in a swoon to the earth. When recovered from this fit, he was conveyed to an adjoining hermitage; but the appearance of a number of peasants from the neighbouring country, who were employed on the field of battle in stripping the dead, led his friends to recommend a second removal. Sir Lucan, however, on attempting to take the monarch on his back, suddenly expired; upon which, Arthur, giving up all hope of a further progress, called to Sir Bedwer, and, delivering to him his good sword Escalibore, adjured him to throw it into the sea, and to bring him back an account of the tokens which he should observe in consequence of this action. Sir Bedwer accepted the commission, but, tempted by the beauty and excellence of the sword, concealed it under a tree, and returned to the king, to whose question respecting what supernatural appearances he had noticed, he was obliged to answer, that he had seen nothing "but waters deep and waves wan." Though severely reproached by the king for his treachery, and strictly enjoined to obey the command which he had received, he returned a second time with an equally unsatisfactory answer, after having thrown the scabbard only into the water; but the indignation and menaces of Arthur, after this second instance of deceit, determined him

to return for the third time and to execute his orders.

Sir Bedwer saw that bote was best,
And to the goode sword he went·
Into the sea full far·he it kest;
Then might he see what that it meant.
There came an hand, withouten rest,
Out of the water, and fair it hent;
And brandished as it should brast,
And sithe, as gleme away it glent.

To the king again went he there
And said, "Lief sir, I saw a hand;
"Out of the water it come all bare,
"And thrice brandished that rich brand."
"Help me! soon were I thore!"
He led his lord unto the strand;
A rich ship, with masts and oar,
Full of ladies there they fand.

The ladies, that were fair and free,
Courteously the king gan they fong;
And one, that brightest was of blee,
Weeped sore, and handes wrung.
"Brother," she said, "wo is me;
"From leeching hast thou been too long:
"I wot, that greatly grieveth me;
"For thy painis are full strong!"

Sir Bedwer, thus separated from his master, of whom he learnt at parting that he was going to the isle of Avalon, in hopes of finding a remedy for his wounds, continued to wander through the forest till near day-break, when an unusually brilliant light directed his steps to a small chapel adjoining to a hermitage. This was the retreat of the pious archbishop who had been persecuted by Modred. He was on his knees before a newly-erected tomb of gray marble, on the top of which was laid an empty bier surrounded by a hundred wax torches. Sir Bedwer, when the good man had finished his devotions, inquired who was buried in that tomb, on which he observed an inscription in golden characters; when the hermit replied, that he had not hitherto attended to that circumstance, his curiosity having been suspended by his anxiety to fulfil the sacred duties recommended to him. How the tomb had been suddenly constructed he knew not; but, about midnight the bier had been brought by a company of ladies, who, with their own hands, had buried the body which it supported, had left an offering of immense value, and had directed him to pray incessantly for the soul of the deceased. Sir Bedwer now examined the inscription, and, finding that the dead body was that of Arthur, requested leave to share the pious office

with the good bishop; from whom, after making himself known, he readily obtained an admission into the holy order of which the prelate had lately taken the habit.

In the mean time queen Guenever, who, as we have seen, had found an asylum in the tower, having learned the fatal effects of the war, retired to a nunnery at Ambresbury, where she took the veil, together with five of her favourite attendants. Such was the state of things when Sir Lancelot, who, on first hearing the tidings of Modred's rebellion had determined to assist the king with all his forces, arrived with a large fleet at Dover.

The first information which he received on landing was sufficient to convince him that he had come too late for most of his purposes. The death of Sir Gawain, the battle of Barren-down, and the subsequent destruction of the royal and rebel armies, were certain: but of the queen it was only known that she had quitted the tower; the place of her retreat, and the motives of it, were not ascertained. She probably still lived; she might perhaps still want his assistance: at all events, it was necessary that he should learn her wishes and intentions, to which his own were always subordinate. He therefore resolved to depart alone in quest of Guenever; and, having summoned his brother Hector, and his

cousins Bohort and Lyonel, directed them to wait for his return during fifteen days; after which, they might dispose of the army as they should judge most expedient.

Accident led him to the very spot which contained the mistress of his heart. Almost extenuated with fatigue and hunger, he entered the cloister at Ambresbury in search of food, and was instantly recognised by Guenever, who fell down in a swoon on his appearance. When recovered by the care of the abbess and of the nuns, who hastened to her assistance, and were followed by the knight, she pointed him out as the person whose fatal affection for her had eventually produced all the miseries by which the country was afflicted. She then addressed herself to Sir Lancelot, and adjured him instantly to quit her presence, lest he should retard the arrival of that tranquil state of mind which she hoped by the grace of God to acquire, and which might enable her, by a faithful discharge of the severe duties now imposed on her, to make her peace with Heaven, and to expiate the enormous transgressions of her former life. By returning to his own country, by protecting his subjects from foreign war and from domestic tyranny, by transferring to a wife those vows from which she willingly released him, he might yet expect many

years of happiness founded on virtue and innocence; and to this happiness, if the prayers of a sincere penitent were of any avail, she yet hoped to contribute. Lancelot replied that their guilt, whatever was its extent, had been mutual, and must require from both the same expiation; that his decision was therefore involved in hers; and that, after bidding her an eternal farewell, he should immediatly repair to some hermitage, and pass the remnant of his days in fasting and in prayer. He then, as a last favour, requested a parting kiss; which she very wisely with-held, bestowing on him in its stead a moral admonition, which was much more likely to confirm him in his pious resolution.

Still pursuing his journey in the same direction, he arrived at an extensive forest, through which he wandered without a determinate object, till the sound of a chapel-bell at last directed him to the same hermitage which already contained Sir Bedwer and the archbishop. Here, after listening to a circumstantial account of Arthur's death, he received absolution from the holy prelate, and was solemnly invested with the monastic habit; and a very few weeks elapsed before the pious congregation was increased by the addition of Sir Bohort and four of his companions, who, when the fleet was

sent back to Britany, had set off in quest of their commander. Sir Lyonel, with fifty knights, who had undertaken the same quest, had been treacherously murdered on their passage through London. Sir Hector, having also departed in search of his brother, took the northern road, and long wandered over the country to no purpose.

During seven years, Sir Lancelot, who after a proper noviciate was ordained to the priesthood, distinguished himself by a life of the most active and exemplary piety; but at length

It fell, against an even-tide,
That Launcelot sickened sely sare:
The bishop hé cleped to his side,
And all his fellows less and mare.
He said, "Brethren, I may no longer abide;
"My baleful blood of life is bare;
What boot is it to hele and hide?
"My foul flesh will to earth fare!

But, brethren, I pray you to night,
"Tomorrow, when ye find me dead,
Upon a bier that ye will me dight,
"And to *Joyous-garde* then me lead.

" For the love of God all might,
" Bury my body in that stead:
" Some time my troth therto I plight;
" Alas! me *for-thinketh** that I so did!"

" Mercy, sir," they said all three,
" For his love that died on rood,
" Giff any evil have grieved thee,
" It is but heaviness of your blood.
" Tomorrow ye shall better be!
" When were ye but of comfort good?"
Merrily spake all men but he,
But straight unto his bed he *yode* †,
And cleped the bishop him until,
And shrove him of his sins clean, &c.

The holy brethren then retired to their repose, but were wakened before day by strange shouts of exultation uttered by the sleeping bishop, who, being with difficulty recovered from his slumber, assured the brethren that he had seen the soul of Lancelot ascending to heaven under an escort of " thirty thousand and seven angels." The astonished and somewhat incredulous hearers, having lighted a candle, approached the bed of the knight;

* repenteth, † went.

and, finding him quite stiff and cold, no longer doubted the truth of the vision.

After five days employed in watching the body, and in reciting the service for the dead, they proceeded to execute the last commands of their friend, and, conveying him on a bier, arrived after a fortnight's march at la Joyeuse Garde. Here they interred him with due solemnity; and here Sir Hector, after his tedious quest, had the good fortune to assist in praying for the soul of his brother, after whose example he renounced the profession of arms, and assumed the monastic habit. On their return, they stopped at the convent of Ambresbury, where they learnt that Guenever had died within a few days of Sir Lancelot; they therefore took charge of the body, which they deposited by the side of Arthur in the chapel of their hermitage, which, receiving successive additions of holy men, gradually grew up into the flourishing and celebrated monastery of Glastonbury.

The lamentations which attended these melancholy events being, in the metrical copy, rather insipid, have been omitted in our extract, which we shall close by the speech of Sir Bohort, as given in Malory's prose compilation. "And now I dare say—that, Sir Lancelot, ther thou lyest, thou were never matched of none earthly knight's hands.

And thou were the curteist knight that ever bare shielde. And thou were the truest freende to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou were the truest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman. And thou were the kindest man that ever stroke with swerde. And thou were the goodliest person that ever came amonge prece (press) of knyghtes. And thou were the meekest man and the gentillest that ever eate in hal among ladies. And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortall foe that ever put spere in the rest!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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